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PETRARCH.

ON THE CHARACTER OF OTHELLO.

AGAMEMNON.

THE HENRIAD.

ANTHOLOGY.

BY

CAPTAIN ROBERT GUTHRIE MACGREGOR,

OF THE BENGAL RETIRED LIST.

LONDON:

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Shapleigh fund

THE announcement by an enterprising publisher of his intention to produce shortly an English Petrarch in one of his very useful Libraries, is the immediate cause of the appearance of the présent volume. Three years ago I printed a translation of the Odes, and I had by me ready for the press a version of the Sonnets of Petrarch. As I intended, some time or other, to publish these also, and did not wish to be forestalled from any other quarter, as the edition of the Odes was exhausted, I determined to print both together and at once. To these I have added some other pieces, putting them all under a common title, in some degree descriptive of the circumstances under which they were composed.

I have been much benefited by reading with Professor Pistrucci, of King's College, somewhat more than one-third of the Sonnets, and I have great pleasure in thus acknowledging the courtesy and intelligence of that gentleman.

R. G. M.

E R R A T A.

Page 87, Sonnet 36, line 13, for "thine" read "yours."

— 37, —, —.

— 48, — 45, — 12, — "yours" read "thy."

— 77, — 74, — 14, — "to none is known" read "is all unknown."

— 80, — 80, — 10, after "deceit" a comma: line 13 after "Reason" a comma,
and after "beat" a comma.

— 81, — 83, in the heading, for "Orsin" read "Orsini."

— 88, — 86, line 2, after "day" a comma.

— 181, — 187, — 6, — "Love" —.

— 136, — 147, — 11, — "light" —.

— 187, — 149, — 7, for "fee" read "fere."

— 189, — 226, — 5, dele comma after "spring," insert one after "die."

— 207, — 20, — 3, after "chain" a comma.

— 222, — 50, — 8, — "grows" a full stop.

— 241, — 67, — 6, — "mourn" a comma.

— 243, — 71, read the last line as follows:

Would that as this my death such life were thine!

— 244, — 72, — 4, — "forlorn" a comma.

— 378, last line but two, for "Troy" read "Ivry."

— 395, — one, — "touch" — "torch."

— 400, first line, for "Canmont" read "Caumont."

— 405, line 16, after "roar'd" dele comma, and insert a —.

— 430, last line, after "enslave" a comma.

— 462, line 17, for "dwelt" read "dwell."

— 477, — 9, for "mutual" read "martial."

— 581, — 15, for "joy" read "joys."

— 544, — "these" read "those."

— 545, — 16, at the end, a comma.

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PETRARCH.

PETRARCH.

SONNET I.

He asks compassion for his state, and penitently confesses the vanity of his love.

YE in my devious rhymes who hear the sound
Of those oft sighs, wherewith, in hot youth's first
And fondest error, I my weak heart nurst,
When I unlike what now I am was found;
My song, where plaints and reveries abound,
As with vain grief, with hopes as vain now curst,
Shall, if one heart there is in true love vers'd,
Be with your pity, if not pardon, crown'd.
For now full well I see how I became
A fable to the world, and, late and long
Myself have lower'd in mine own esteem!
Thus of my vanity the fruit is shame,
Repentance, and a knowledge clear and strong
That mortal joy is all a passing dream!

SONNET II.

Strong against so many former wiles of love, he could not defend himself
against this last assault.

ONE sweet and signal vengeance to obtain,
 To punish in a day my life's long crime,
 As one who, bent on harm, waits place and time,
 Love craftily took up his bow again.
 My virtue had retir'd to watch my heart,
 Thence of weak eyes the danger to repel,
 When momentarily a mortal blow there fell
 Where blunted hitherto dropt ev'ry dart.
 And thus, o'erpow'red in that first attack,
 She had nor vigour left enough, nor room
 Even to arm her for my pressing need,
 Nor to the steep and painful mountain back
 To draw me, safe and scathless from that doom,
 Whence, tho' alas! too weak, she fain had freed.

SONNET III.

It was a poor and coward thing of Love to wound him at a time when he could
not expect attack.

'Twas on the blessed morning when the sun
 In pity of our Maker hid his light,
 That, unawares, the captive I was won,
 Lady, of your bright eyes which chain'd me quite;
 That seem'd to me no time against the blows
 Of love to make defence, to frame relief:
 Secure and unsuspecting, thus my woes
 Date their commencement from the common grief.
 Love found me feeble then and fenceless all,
 Open the way and easy to my heart
 Thro' eyes, where since my sorrows ebb and flow:
 But therein was, methinks, his triumph small,
 On me, in that weak state, to strike his dart,
 Yet hide from you so strong his very bow.

SONNET IV.

Enamoured of Laura, he extols the humble spot of her birth, and derives from it
new food for his praises.

WHO show'd such infinite providence and skill
In his eternal government divine,
Who launch'd the spheres, gave sun and moon to shine,
And brightest wonders the dark void to fill;
On earth who came the Scriptures to maintain,
Which for long years the truth had buried yet,
Took John and Peter from the fisher's net
And gave to each his part i' th' heav'nly reign.
He for his birth fair Rome preferr'd not then,
But lowly Bethlem; thus o'er proudest state
He ever loves humility to raise.
Now rises from small spot like sun agen,
Whom Nature hails, the place grows bright and great
Which birth so heav'nly to our earth displays.

SONNET V.

He plays upon the name LAURETA, or LAURA.

IN sighs when I outbreathe your cherish'd name,
That name which love has writ upon my heart,
LAUd instantly upon my doating tongue,
At the first thought of its sweet sound, is heard:
Your REgal state, which I encounter next,
Doubles my valour in that high emprise:
But TAcit ends the word: your praise to tell
Is fitting load for better backs than mine.
Thus all who call you, by the name itself,
Are taught at once to LAUd and to REvere,
O worthy of all rev'rence and esteem!
Save that perchance Apollo may disdain
That mortal tongue of his immortal boughs
Should ever so presume as e'en to speak.

SONNET VI.

His foolish fondness in following Laura.

So wayward now my will, and so unwise
 To follow her who turns from me in flight,
 And, from love's fetters free herself and light,
 Before my slow and shackled motion flies,
 That less it lists, the more my signs and cries
 Would point where passes the safe path and right,
 Nor ought avails to check or to excite,
 For Love's own nature curb and spur defies.
 Thus, when perforce the bridle he has won,
 And helpless at his mercy I remain,
 Against my will he speeds me to mine end
 'Neath yon cold laurel, whose false boughs upon
 Hangs the harsh fruit, which, tasted, spreads the pain
 I sought to stay, and mars where it should mend.

SONNET VII.

To a friend, encouraging her to literature.

LUXURY, indolence, and silken ease
 Have ev'ry virtue banish'd from the world,
 Whence from its own old course misled, or hurl'd
 Our Nature bows her to their base decrees:
 Each kindlier light of Heav'n is now so dark
 Which erst o'er mortal life shed wisdom's beam,
 Who now would drink of Helicon's fair stream
 Is made of all the marvel and the mark.
 "*What madness for the laurel, or the bays?*
Philosophy still naked walks and poor,"
 Say the rank crowd on filthy lucre bent.
 Tho' few thy comrades on those lofty ways,
 Even for this, sweet friend, I pray thee more,
 Still prosecute thy pure and high intent.

PETRARCH.

SONNET VIII.

Birds, sent as a present to a friend, address their new master.

BENEATH the verdant hills—where the fair vest
Of earthly mould first took the Lady dear,
Who him that sends us, feather'd captives, here
Awakens often from his tearful rest—
Liv'd we in freedom and in quiet, blest
With ev'ry thing which life below might cheer,
No foe suspecting, harass'd by no fear
That aught our wand'rings ever could molest;
But snatcht from that serener life, and thrown
To the low wretched state we here endure,
One comfort, short of death, survives alone:
Vengeance upon our captor full and sure!
Who, slave himself at others' pow'r, remains
Pent in worse prison, bound by sterner chains.

SONNET IX.

With a present to a friend in spring-time.

WHEN the great planet which directs the hours
To dwell with Taurus from the North is borne,
Such virtue rays from each enkindled horn,
Rare beauty instantly all nature dows;
Nor this alone, which meets our sight, that flow'rs
Richly the upland and the vale adorn,
But Earth's cold womb, else lustreless and lorn,
Is quick and warm with vivifying pow'rs,
Till herbs and fruits, like these I send, are rife
—So she, a sun amid her fellow fair,
Shedding the rays of her bright eyes on me,
Thoughts, acts, and words of love wakes into life—
But ah! for me is no new Spring, nor e'er,
Smile they on whom she will, again can be.

SONNET X.

To Stephen Colonna the elder, inviting him to the country.

GLORIOUS Colonna ! still the strength and stay
 Of our best hopes, and the great Latin name,
 Whom pow'r could never from the true right way
 Seduce by flatt'ry or by terror tame :
 No palace, theatres, nor arches here,
 But, in their stead, the fir, the beech, and pine
 On the green sward, with the fair mountain near
 Pac'd to and fro by poet friend of thine ;
 Thus unto heav'n the soul from earth is caught ;
 While Philomel, who sweetly to the shade
 The livelong night her desolate lot complains,
 Fills the soft heart with many an amorous thought
 —Ah ! why is so rare good imperfect made
 While sever'd from us still my Lord remains.

BALLATA I.

Since Laura perceived his love she has been colder to him than before.

IN sun or shade, I never saw
 My Lady yet her veil withdraw,
 Since, else its every want supplied,
 My heart's great aim she first descried.
 While I kept secret the fond thought
 To my mind's peace which death has wrought,
 Sweet pity often graced her mien ;
 But since my flame observ'd has been,
 Her fine and flowing locks are hid,
 The love-look sleeps within its lid ;
 What best I priz'd in life is lost,
 In summer's heat and winter's frost,
 While hides her cruel veil at will
 Of those bright eyes the dear light still.

SONNET XI.

He hopes that time, rendering Laura less beautiful, will make her kinder.

LADY, if grace to me so long be lent
 From love's sharp tyranny and trials keen,
 Ere my last days, in life's far vale, are seen,
 To know of thy bright eyes the lustre spent,
 The fine gold of thy hair wi' silver sprent,
 Neglected the gay wreaths and robes of green,
 Pale too and thin the face which made me, e'en
 'Gainst injury, slow and timid to lament :
 Then will I, for such boldness Love would give,
 Lay bare my secret heart, in martyr's fire
 Years, days, and hours that yet has known to live ;
 And, tho' the time then suit not fair desire,
 At least there may arrive to my long grief,
 Too late of tender sighs the poor relief.

SONNET XII.

The love of Laura is to him a step towards supreme bliss.

WHEN Love, whose proper throne is that sweet face,
 At times escorts her 'mid the sister fair,
 As their each beauty is than hers less rare,
 So swells in me the fond desire apace.
 I bless the hour, the season and the place,
 So high and heav'nward when my eyes could dare ;
 And say : "*My heart ! in grateful mem'ry bear
 This lofty honour and surpassing grace :*
*From her descends the tender truthful thought,
 Which follow'd, bliss supreme shall thee repay,
 Who spurn'st the vanities that win the crowd :*
*From her that gentle graceful love is caught,
 To Heav'n which leads thee by the right-hand way,
 And crowns e'en here with hopes both pure and proud."*

SONNET XIII.

Departing from Laura.

WITH weary frame which painfully I bear,
 I look behind me at each onward pace,
 And then take comfort from your native air,
 Which following fans my melancholy face ;
 The far way, my frail life, the cherish'd fair
 Whom thus I leave, as then my thoughts retrace,
 I fix my feet in silent pale despair
 And on the earth my tearful eyes abase.
 At times a doubt too rises on my woes,
*"How ever can this weak and wasted frame
 Live from life's spirit and one source afar?"*
 Love's answer soon the truth forgotten shows—
*This high pure privilege true lovers claim
 Who from mere human feelings franchis'd are !"*

BALLATA II.

Since, when absent, he will see her only in thought, he invites his eyes to feast themselves on her face before he goes.

MY wearied eyes! while looking thus
 On that fair fatal face to us,
 Be wise, be brief, for—hence my sighs—
 Already Love our bliss denies.
 Death only can the amorous track
 Shut from my thoughts which leads them back
 To the sweet port of all their weal ;
 But lesser objects may conceal
 Our light from you, that meaner far
 In virtue and perfection are.
 Wherefore, poor eyes ! ere yet appears,
 Already nigh, the time of tears,
 Now, after long privation past,
 Look, and some comfort take at last.

SONNET XIV.

He compares himself to a pilgrim going to worship at Rome.

As parts the aged pilgrim, worn and gray,
 From the dear spot his life where he had spent,
 From his poor family by sorrow rent,
 Whose love still fears him fainting in decay :
 Thence dragging heavily, in life's last day
 His suff'ring frame, on pious journey bent,
 Pricking with earnest pray'rs his good intent,
 Tho' bowed with years and weary with the way,
 He reaches Rome, still following his desire
 The likeness of his Lord on earth to see
 Whom yet he hopes in Heav'n above to meet ;
 So I too seek, nor in the fond quest tire,
 Lady, in other fair, if aught there be
 That faintly may recal thy beauties sweet.

SONNET XV.

What befalls him when Laura is present and when she departs.

TEARS, bitter tears adown my pale cheek rain,
 Bursts from mine anguish'd breast a storm of sighs
 Whene'er on you I turn my passionate eyes
 For whom alone this bright world I disdain.
 True! to my ardent wishes and old pain
 That mild sweet smile a peaceful balm supplies,
 Rescues me from the martyr fire that tries,
 Rapt and intent on you whilst I remain ;
 Thus in your presence—but my spirits freeze
 When, ush'ring with fond acts a warm adieu,
 My fatal stars from life's quencht heav'n decay.
 My soul releas'd at last with Love's apt keys
 But issues from my heart to follow you,
 Nor tears itself without much thought away.

SONNET XVI.

He flies, but passion pursues him.

WHEN all my mind I turn to the one part
 Where sheds my Lady's face its beauteous light,
 And lingers in my loving thought the light
 That burns and racks within me ev'ry part,
 I from my heart who fear that it may part,
 And see the near end of my single light,
 Go, as a blind man, groping without light,
 Who knows not where yet presses to depart.
 Thus from the blows which ever wish me dead
 I flee, but not so swiftly that desire
 Ceases to come, as is its wont, with me.
 Silent I move: for accents of the dead
 Would melt the gen'ral age: and I desire
 That sighs and tears should only fall from me.

SONNET XVII.

He likens himself to a moth.

CREATURES there are in life of so keen sight
 Defence who need not from the noonday sun,
 And others dazzled by excess of light
 Who issue not abroad till day is done,
 And, with weak fondness, some because 'tis bright,
 Who in the death-flame for enjoyment run,
 Thus proving theirs a diff'rent virtue quite—
 Alas! of this last kind myself am one;
 For, of this fair the splendour to regard,
 I am but weak and ill—against late hours
 And darkness gath'ring round—myself to ward.
 Wherefore, with tearful eyes of failing pow'rs,
 My destiny condemns me still to turn
 Where following faster I but fiercer burn.

SONNET XVIII.

He has often tried, but in vain, to praise the beauties of his beloved.

ASHAM'D at times that I am silent, yet,
 Lady, tho' your rare beauties prompt my rhyme,
 When first I saw thee I recal the time
 Such as again no other can be met.
 But, with such burthen on my shoulders set,
 My mind, its frailty feeling, cannot climb,
 And shrinks alike from polish'd and sublime,
 While my vain utt'rance frozen terrors let.
 Often already have I sought to sing,
 But midway in my breast the voice was stay'd,
 For ah! so high what praise may ever spring?
 And oft have I the tender verse essay'd
 But still in vain; pen, hand and intellect
 In the first effort conquer'd are and check'd.

SONNET XIX.

His heart, refused by Laura, is in danger of death, unless she pity and help him.

A THOUSAND times, sweet warrior, have I tried,
 Proff'ring my heart to thee, some peace to gain
 From those bright eyes, but still, alas! in vain,
 To such low level stoops not thy chaste pride.
 If others seek the love thus thrown aside,
 Vain were their hopes and labours to obtain;
 The heart thou spurnest I alike disdain,
 To thee displeasing, 'tis by me denied.
 But, if discarded thus, it find not thee
 Its joyless exile willing to befriend,
 Alone, untaught at others' will to wend,
 Soon from life's weary burden will it flee.
 How heavy then the guilt to both, but more
 To thee, for thee it did the most adore.

SESTINA I

He lays bare his misery, accuses Laura as the cause, prays that she would be kinder, but despairs of pity.

To every animal that dwells on earth,
Except to those which have in hate the sun,
Their time of labour is while lasts the day;
But when high Heav'n relumes its thousand stars,
This seeks his hut, and that its native wood,
Each finds repose, at least until the dawn.

But I, when fresh and fair begins the dawn
To chase the ling'ring shades that cloak'd the earth,
Wak'ning the animals in every wood,
No truce to sorrow find while rolls the sun;
And, when again I see the glist'ning stars,
Still wander, weeping, wishing for the day.

When sober evening chases the bright day,
And this our darkness makes for others dawn,
Pensive I look upon the cruel stars
Which fram'd me of such pliant passionate earth,
And curse the day that e'er I saw the sun
Which makes me native seem of wildest wood.

And yet methinks was ne'er in any wood,
So wild a denizen, by night or day,
As she whom thus I blame in shade and sun:
Me night's first sleep o'ercomes not, nor the dawn,
For though in mortal coil I tread the earth,
My firm and fond desire is from the stars.

Ere up to you I turn, O lustrous stars,
Or downwards in love's labyrinthine wood,
Leaving my fleshly frame in mould'ring earth,
Could I but pity find in her, one day
Would many years redeem, and to the dawn
With bliss enrich me from the setting sun!

O might I be with her where sinks the sun,
 No other eyes upon us but the stars,
 Alone, one sweet night, ended by no dawn,
 Nor she again transfigur'd in green wood,
 To cheat my clasping arms, as on the day,
 When Phoebus vainly follow'd her on earth!

I shall lie low in earth, in crumbling wood,
 And clust'ring stars shall gem the noon of day
 Ere on so sweet a dawn shall rise that sun.

CANZONE I.

How from a state of liberty he has become the slave of Love, and what he has thereby suffered.

IN the sweet season when my life was new,
 Which saw the birth, and still the being sees
 Of the fierce passion for my ill that grew,
 Fain would I sing—my sorrow to appease—
 How then I liv'd, in liberty, at ease,
 While o'er my heart held slighted Love no sway;
 And how, at length, by too high scorn, for aye,
 I sank his slave, and what befel me then,
 Whereby to all a warning I remain;
 Although my sharpest pain
 Be elsewhere written, so that many a pen
 Is tir'd already, and, in every vale,
 The echo of my heavy sighs is rife,
 Some credence forcing of my anguish'd life;
 And, as her wont, if here my mem'ry fail,
 Be my long martyrdom its saving plea,
 And the one thought which so its torment made,
 As every feeling else to throw in shade,
 And make me of myself forgetful be—
 Ruling life's inmost core, its bare rind left for me.

Long years and many had pass'd o'er my head,
Since, in Love's first assault, was dealt my wound,
And from my brow its youthful air had fled,
While cold and cautious thoughts my heart around
Had made it almost adamant ground,
To loosen which hard passion gave no rest:
No sorrow yet with tears had bath'd my breast,
Nor broke my sleep: and what was not in mine
A miracle to me in others seem'd.
Life's sure test death is deem'd,
As cloudless eve best proves the past day fine;
Ah me! the tyrant, whom I sing, descried
Ere long his error, that, till then, his dart
Not yet beneath the gown had pierc'd my heart,
And brought a puissant Lady as his guide,
'Gainst whom of small or no avail has been
Genius, or force, to strive or supplicate.
These two transform'd me to my present state,
Making of breathing man a laurel green,
Which loses not its leaves tho' wintry blasts be keen.

What my amaze, when first I fully learn'd
The wond'rous change upon my person done,
And saw my thin hairs to those green leaves turn'd
(Whence yet for them a crown I might have won);
My feet wherewith I stood, and mov'd, and run
—Thus to the soul the subject members bow—
Become two roots upon the shore, not now
Of fabled Peneus, but a stream as proud,
And stiffen'd to a branch my either arm!
Nor less was my alarm,
When next my frame white down was seen to shroud,
While, 'neath the deadly leven, shatter'd lay
My first green hope that soar'd, too proud, in air,
Because, in sooth, I knew not when nor where
I left my latter state; but, night and day,

Where it was struck, alone, in tears, I went,
Still seeking it alwhere, and in the wave;
And, for its fatal fall, while able, gave
My tongue no respite from its one lament,
For the sad snowy swan both ferm and language lent.

Thus that lov'd wave—my mortal speech put by
For birdlike song—I track'd with constant feet,
Still asking mercy with a stranger cry;
But ne'er in tones so tender, nor so sweet,
Knew I my amorous sorrow to repeat,
As might her hard and cruel bosom melt:
Judge, still if mem'ry sting, what then I felt!
But ah! not now the past, it rather needs
Of her my lovely and inveterate foe
The present pow'r to show,
Tho' such she be all language as exceeds.
She with a glance who rules us as her own,
Op'ning my breast my heart in hand to take,
Thus said to me: "*Of this no mention make.*"
I saw her then, in alter'd air, alone,
So that I recognised her not—O shame
Be on my truant mind and faithless sight!
And when the truth I told her in sore fright,
She soon resum'd her old accustom'd frame,
While, desperate and half dead, a hard rock mine became.

As spoke she, o'er her mien such feeling stirr'd,
That from the solid rock, with lively fear,
"*Haply I am not what you deem,*" I heard;
And then methought, "*If she but help me here,
No life can ever weary be, or drear;
To make me weep, return, my banish'd Lord!*"
I know not how, but thence, the pow'r restor'd,
Blaming no other than myself, I went,
And, nor alive, nor dead, the long day past.

But, because time flies fast,
And the pen answers ill my good intent,
Full many a thing long written in my mind
I here omit; and only mention such
Whereat who hears them now will marvel much.
Death so his hand around my vitals twin'd,
Not silence from its grasp my heart could save,
Or succour to its outrag'd virtue bring:
As speech to me was a forbidden thing,
To paper and to ink my griefs I gave
—Life, not my own, is lost through you who dig my grave.

I fondly thought before her eyes, at length,
Tho' low and lost, some mercy to obtain;
And this the hope which lent my spirit strength.
Sometimes humility o'ercomes disdain,
Sometimes inflames it to worse spite again;
This knew I, who so long was left in night,
That from such pray'rs had disappear'd my light;
Till I, who sought her still, nor found, alas!
Even her shade, nor of her feet a sign,
Outwearied and supine,
As one who midway sleeps, upon the grass
Threw me, and there, accusing the brief ray,
Of bitter tears I loos'd the prison'd flood,
To flow and fall, to them as seem'd it good.
Ne'er vanish'd snow before the sun away,
As then to melt apace it me befel,
Till, 'neath a spreading beech, a fountain swell'd;
Long in that change my humid course I held,
—Who ever saw from man a true fount well?
And yet, tho' strange it sound, things known and sure I tell.

The soul from God its nobler nature gains
(For none save He such favour could bestow)

And like our Maker its high state retains.
To pardon who is never tired, nor slow,
If but with humble heart and suppliant show,
For mercy for past sins to Him we bend ;
And if, against his wont, He seem to lend,
Awhile, a cold ear to our earnest pray'rs,
'Tis that right fear the sinner more may fill ;
For he repents but ill
His old crime for another who prepares.
Thus, when my Lady, while her bosom yearn'd
With pity, deign'd to look on me, and knew
That equal with my fault its penance grew,
To my old state and shape I soon return'd.
But nought there is on earth in which the wise
May trust, for, wearying braving her afresh,
To rugged stone she chang'd my quiv'ring flesh,
So that, in their old strain, my broken cries
In vain ask'd death, or told her one name to deaf skies.

A sad and wand'ring shade, I next recal,
Thro' many a distant and deserted glen,
That long I mourn'd my indissoluble thrall.
At length my malady seem'd ended, when
I to my earthly frame return'd agen,
Haply but greater grief therein to feel ;
Still following my desire with such fond zeal
That once (beneath the proud sun's fiercest blaze,
Returning from the chase, as was my wont)
Naked, where gush'd a font,
My fair and fatal tyrant met my gaze;
I whom nought else could pleasure, paused to look,
While, touch'd with shame as natural as intense,
Herself to hide or punish my offence,
She o'er my face the crystal waters shook
—I still speak true, tho' truth may seem a lie—

Instantly from my proper person torn,
A solitary stag, I felt me borne
In winged terrors the dark forest through,
As still of my own dogs the rushing storm I flew.

My Song! I never was that cloud of gold
Which once descended in such precious rain,
Easing awhile with bliss Jove's amorous pain;
I was a flame, kindled by one bright eye,
I was the bird which gladly soar'd on high,
Exalting her whose praise in song I wake;
Nor, for new fancies, knew I to forsake
My first fond laurel, 'neath whose welcome shade
Ever from my firm heart all meaner pleasures fade.

SONNET XX.

Reply to Stramazzo of Perugia, who invited him to write.

If the world-honour'd leaf, whose green defies
The wrath of Heav'n when thunders mighty Jove,
Had not to me prohibited the crown
Which wreathes of wont the gifted poet's brow,
I were a friend of these your idols too,
Whom our vile age so shamelessly ignores:
But that sore insult keeps me now aloof
From the first patron of the olive bough:
For Ethiop earth beneath its tropic sun
Ne'er burn'd with such fierce heat, as I with rage
At losing thing so comely and beloved.
Resort then to some calmer fuller fount,
For of all moisture mine is drained and dry,
Save that which falleth from mine eyes in tears.

SONNET XXI.

He congratulates with a friend on his return to the right path.

LOVE griev'd, and I with him at times to see,
 By what strange practices and cunning art,
 You still continued from his fetters free,
 From whom my feet were never far apart.
 Since to the right way brought by God's decree,
 Lifting my hands to Heav'n with pious heart,
 I thank him for his love and grace, for He
 The soul-pray'r of the just will never thwart:
 And if, returning to the amorous strife,
 Its fair desire to teach us to deny,
 Hollows and hillocks in thy path abound,
 'Tis but to prove to us with thorns how rife
 The narrow way, the ascent how hard and high,
 Where with true virtue man at last is crown'd.

SONNET XXII.

On the same subject.

THAN me more joyful never reach'd the shore
 A vessel, by the winds long tost and tried,
 Whose crew, late hopeless on the waters wide,
 To a good God their thanks, now prostrate, pour,
 Nor captive from his dungeon ever tore,
 Around whose neck the noose of death was tied,
 More glad than me, that weapon laid aside
 Which to my lord hostility long bore.
 All ye who honour love in poet strain,
 To the good minstrel of the amorous lay
 Return due praise, tho' once he went astray;
 For greater glory is, in Heav'n's blest reign,
 O'er one sinner sav'd, and higher praise,
 Than e'en for ninety-nine of perfect ways.

SONNET XXIII.

On the movement of the Emperor against the Infidels, and the return of the Pope to Rome.

THE high successor of our Charles, whose hair
 The crown of his great ancestor adorns,
 Already has ta'en arms, to bruise the horns
 Of Babylon, and all her name who bear;
 Christ's holy vicar with the honour'd load
 Of keys and cloak, returning to his home,
 Shall see Bologna and our noble Rome,
 If no ill fortune bar his further road.
 Best to your meek and high-born lamb belongs
 To beat the fierce wolf down: so may it be
 With all who loyalty and love deny.
 Console at length your waiting country's wrongs,
 And Rome's, who longs once more her spouse to see,
 And gird for Christ the good sword on thy thigh.

CANZONE II.

In support of the proposed Crusade against the Infidels.

O THOU, in Heav'n expected, bright and blest,
 Spirit! who, from the common frailty free
 Of human kind, in human form art drest,
 God's handmaid, dutiful and dear, to thee
 Henceforth the pathway easy lies and plain,
 By which, from earth, we bliss eternal gain:
 Lo! at the wish, to waft thy venturous prore
 From the blind world it fain would leave behind
 And seek that better shore,
 Springs the sweet comfort of the western wind,
 Which safe amid this dark and dangerous vale,
 Where we our own, the primal sin deplore,
 Right on shall guide her, from her old chains freed,
 And, without let or fail,
 Where havens her best hope, to the true East shall lead.

Haply the suppliant tears of pious men,
Their earnest vows and loving pray'rs at last
Unto the throne of heavenly grace have past;
Yet, breath'd by human helplessness, ah! when
Had purest orison the skill and force
To bend eternal justice from its course?
But He, heaven's bounteous ruler from on high,
On the sad sacred spot, where erst he bled,
Will turn his pitying eye,
And thro' the spirit of our new Charles spread
Thirst of that vengeance, whose too long delay
From general Europe wakes the bitter sigh;
To his loved spouse such aid will he convey,
That, his dread voice to hear,
Proud Babylon shall shrink assail'd with secret fear.

All, by the gay Garonne, the kingly Rhine,
Between the blue Rhone and salt sea who dwell,
All in whose bosoms worth and honour swell,
Eagerly haste the Christian cross to join:
Spain of her warlike sons, from the far west,
Unto the Pyrene, pours forth her best:
Britannia and the Islands, which are found
Northward from Calpe, studding Ocean's breast,
E'en to that land renown'd
In the rich lore of sacred Helicon,
Various in arms and language, garb and guise,
With pious fury urge the bold emprise.
What love was e'er so just, so worthy, known?
Or when did holier flame
Kindle the mind of man to a more noble aim?

Far in the hardy north a land there lies,
Buried in thick-ribb'd ice and constant snows,
Where scant the days and clouded are the skies,
And seldom the bright sun his glad warmth throws;

There, enemy of peace by nature, springs
A people to whom death no terror brings;
If these, with new devotedness, we see,
In Gothic fury baring the keen glaive,
Turk, Arab, and Chaldee!
All, who, between us and the Red Sea wave,
To heathen gods bow the idolatrous knee,
Arm and advance! we heed not your blind rage;
A naked race, timid in act, and slow,
Unskill'd the war to wage,
Whose far aim on the wind contrives a coward blow.

Now is the hour to free from the old yoke
Our galled necks, to rend the veil away
Too long permitted our dull sight to cloak:
Now too, should all, whose breasts the heavenly ray
Of genius lights, exert its pow'rs sublime,
And or in bold harangue, or burning rhyme,
Point the proud prize and fan the gen'rous flame.
If Orpheus and Amphion credit claim,
Legends of distant time,
Less marvel 'twere, if, at thy earnest call,
Italia, with her children, should awake,
And wield the willing lance for Christ's dear sake.
Our ancient mother, read she right, in all
Her fortune's hist'ry ne'er
A cause of combat knew so glorious and so fair!

Thou, whose keen mind has ev'ry theme explor'd,
And truest ore from Time's rich treasury won,
On earthly pinion who hast heavenward soar'd,
Well knowest, from her founder, Mars' bold son,
To great Augustus, he, whose brow around
Thrice was the laurel green in triumph bound,
How Rome was ever lavish of her blood,
The right to vindicate, the weak redress;

And now, when gratitude,
When piety appeal, shall she do less
To avenge the injury and end the scorn
By blessed Mary's glorious offspring borne?
What fear we, while the heathen for success
Confide in human powers,
If, on the adverse side, be Christ, and his side ours?

Turn, too, when Xerxes our free shores to tread
Rushed in hot haste, and dream'd the perilous main
With scourge and fetter to chastise and chain,
—What see'st? Wild wailing o'er their husbands dead,
Persia's pale matrons wrapt in weeds of woe,
And red with gore the gulf of Salamis!
To prove our triumph certain, to foreshow
The utter ruin of our Eastern foe,
No single instance this;
Miltiades and Marathon recal,
See, with his patriot few, Leonidas
Closing, Thermopylæ, thy bloody pass!
Like them to dare and do, to God let all
With heart and knee bow down,
Who for our arms and age has kept this great renown.

Thou shalt see Italy, that honour'd land,
Which from my eyes, O Song! nor seas, streams, heights,
So long have barr'd and bann'd,
But Love alone, who with his haughty lights
The more allures me as he worse excites,
Till Nature fails against his constant wiles.
Go then, and join thy comrades; not alone
Beneath fair female zone
Dwells Love, who, at his will, moves us to tears or smiles.

CANZONE III.

Whether or no he should cease to love Laura.

GREEN robes and red, purple, or brown, or gray
No Lady ever wore,
Nor hair of gold in sunny tresses twin'd,
So beautiful as she, who spoils my mind
Of judgment, and from freedom's lofty path
So draws me with her that I may not bear
Any less heavy yoke.

And if indeed at times—for wisdom fails
Where martyrdom breeds doubt—
The soul should ever arm it to complain
Suddenly from each reinless rude desire
Her smile recalls, and razes from my heart
Ev'ry rash enterprise, while all disdain
Is soften'd in her sight.

For all that I have ever borne for love,
And still am doom'd to bear,
Till she who wounded it shall heal my heart,
Rejecting homage e'en while she invites,
Be vengeance done ! but let not pride nor ire
'Gainst my humility the lovely pass
By which I enter'd bar.

The hour and day wherein I op'd my eyes
On the bright black and white,
Which drive me thence where eager love impell'd
Were of that life which now my sorrow makes,
New roots, and she in whom our age is proud,
Whom to behold without a tender awe
Needs heart of lead or wood.

The tear then from these eyes that frequent falls—
HE thus my pale cheek bathes
Who planted first within my fenceless flank
Love's shaft—diverts me not from my desire ;
And in just part the proper sentence falls ;
For her my spirit sighs, and worthy she
To stanch its secret wounds.

Spring from within me these conflicting thoughts,
To weary, wound myself,
Each a sure sword against its master turn'd :
Nor do I pray her to be therefore freed,
For less direct to Heav'n all other paths,
And to that glorious kingdom none can soar
Certes in sounder bark.

Benignant stars their bright companionship
Gave to the fortunate side
When came that fair birth on 'our nether world,
Its sole star since, who, as the laurel leaf,
The worth of honour fresh and fragrant keeps,
Where lightnings play not, nor ungrateful winds
Ever o'ersway its head.

Well know I that the hope to paint in verse
Her praises would but tire
The worthiest hand that e'er put forth its pen :
Who, in all Memory's richest cells, e'er saw
Such angel virtue so rare beauty shrin'd,
As in those eyes, twin symbols of all worth,
Sweet keys of my gone heart?

Lady, wherever shines the sun, than you
Love has no dearer pledge.

SESTINA II.

Though he despair of her pity, he vows to love her until death.

A YOUTHFUL Lady 'neath a laurel green
Was seated, fairer, colder than the snow,
On which no sun has shone for many years:
Her sweet speech, her bright face, and flowing hair
So pleas'd, she yet is present to my eyes,
And aye must be, whatever fate prevail.

These my fond thoughts of her shall fade and fail
When foliage ceases on the laurel green;
Nor calm can be my heart, nor check'd these eyes
Until the fire shall freeze, or burns the snow:
Easier upon my head to count each hair
Than, ere that day shall dawn, the parting years.

But, since time flies, and roll the rapid years,
And death may, in the midst of life, assail,
With full brown locks, or scant and silver hair,
I still the shade of that sweet laurel green
Follow, through fiercest sun and deepest snow,
Till the last day shall close my weary eyes.

O never sure were seen such brilliant eyes,
In this our age or in the older years,
Which mould and melt me, as the sun melts snow,
Into a stream of tears adown the vale,
Wat'ring the hard roots of that laurel green,
Whose boughs are diamonds and gold whose hair.

I fear that Time my mien may change and hair,
Ere, with true pity touch'd, shall greet my eyes
My idol imag'd in that laurel green:

For, unless memory err, through seven long years
 Till now, full many a shore has heard my wail,
 By night, at noon, in summer and in snow.

Thus fire within, without the cold cold snow,
 Alone, with these my thoughts and her bright hair,
 Alway and ev'rywhere I bear my ail,
 Haply to find some mercy in the eyes
 Of unborn nations and far future years,
 If so long flourishes our laurel green.

The gold and topaz of the sun on snow
 Are sham'd by the bright hair above those eyes,
 Searing the short green of my life's vain years.

SONNET XXIV.

Laura dangerously ill.

THAT graceful soul, in mercy call'd away
 Before her time to bid the world farewell,
 If welcom'd as she ought in the realms of day,
 In Heav'n's most blessed regions sure shall dwell.
 There between Mars and Venus if she stay,
 Her sight the brightness of the sun will quell,
 Because, her infinite beauty to survey,
 The spirits of the blest will round her swell.
 If she decide upon the fourth fair nest
 Each of the three to dwindle will begin,
 And she alone the fame of beauty win,
 Nor e'en in the fifth circle may she rest ;
 Thence higher if she soar, I surely trust
 Jove with all other stars in darkness will be thrust.

SONNET XXV.

With his death, which he feels already near, will end the torments which oppress
him.

THE nearer I approach my life's last day,
The certain day that limits human woe
I better mark, in Time's swift silent flow
How the fond hopes he brought all past away.
Of love no longer—to myself I say—
We now may commune, for, as virgin snow,
The hard and heavy load we drag below
Dissolves and dies, ere rest in heav'n repay.
And prostrate with it must each fair hope lie
Which here beguil'd us and betray'd so long,
And joy, grief, fear and pride alike shall cease :
And then too shall we see with clearer eye
How oft we trod in weary ways and wrong,
And why so long in vain we sigh'd for peace.

SONNET XXVI.

Laura, who is ill, appears to him in a dream, and assures him that she still lives.

ALREADY, in the east, the star of love
Was flaming, and that other in the north,
Which Juno's jealousy is wont to move,
Its beautiful and lustrous rays shot forth;
Barefooted and half clad, the housewife old
Had stirr'd her fire, and set herself to weave;
Each tender heart the thoughtful time control'd
Which evermore the lover wakes to grieve,
When my fond hope, already at life's last,
Came to my heart, not by the wonted way
Where sleep its seal, its dew where sorrow cast—
Alas! how chang'd—and said, or seem'd to say,
“Sight of these eyes not yet does Heav'n refuse,
Then wherefore should thy tost heart courage lose?”

SONNET XXVII.

He compares her to a laurel, and supplicates Apollo to defend it from storms.

IF live the fair desire; Apollo, yet
 Which fir'd thy spirit once on Peneus' shore,
 And if the bright hair lov'd so well of yore
 In lapse of years thou dost not now forget,
 From the long frost, from seasons rude and keen,
 Which last while hides itself thy kindling brow,
 Defend this consecrate and honour'd bough,
 Which snar'd thee erst, whose slave I since have been,
 And, by the virtue of the love so dear
 Which sooth'd, sustain'd thee in that early strife,
 Our air from raw and low'ring vapours clear :
 So shall we see our Lady, to new life
 Restor'd, her seat upon the green sward take,
 Where her own graceful arms a sweet shade o'er her
 make.

SONNET XXVIII.

He seeks solitude, but Love follows him even there.

ALONE and pensive, the deserted plain,
 With tardy pace and sad, I wander by;
 And mine eyes o'er it rove, intent to fly
 Where distant shores no trace of man retain;
 No help save this I find, some cave to gain
 Where never may intrude man's curious eye,
 Lest on my brow, a stranger long to joy,
 He read the secret fire which makes my pain
 For here, methinks, the mountain and the flood,
 Valley and forest the strange temper know
 Of my sad life conceal'd from others' sight
 —Yet where, where shall I find so wild a wood,
 A way so rough that there Love cannot go
 Communing with me the long day and night?

SONNET XXIX.

He would not himself end his life, but he desires to die.

HAD I believ'd that Death could set me free
 From the anxious amorous thoughts my peace that mar,
 With these my own hands which yet stainless are,
 Life had I loos'd, long hateful grown to me.
 Yet, for I fear 'twould but a passage be
 From grief to grief, from old to other war,
 Hither the dark shades my escape that bar,
 I still remain, nor hope relief to see.
 High time it surely is that he had sped
 The fatal arrow from his pitiless bow
 In others' blood so often bath'd and red;
 And I of Love and Death have pray'd it so—
 He listens not, but leaves me here half dead,
 Nor cares to call me to himself below.

CANZONE IV.

He grieves that he is so far from her.

THE thread on which my weary life depends
 So fragile is and weak,
 If none kind succour lends,
 Soon 'neath the painful burden will it break;
 Since doom'd to take my sad farewell of her,
 In whom begins and ends
 My bliss, one hope, to stir
 My sinking spirit from its black despair,
 Whispers, "*Though lost awhile*
That form so dear and fair,
Sad soul! the trial bear,
For thee e'en yet the sun may brightly shine,
And days more happy smile,
Once more the lost lov'd treasure may be thine;"

This thought awhile sustains me, but again
To fail me and forsake in worse excess of pain.

Time flies apace: the silent hours and swift
So urge his journey on,
Short span to me is left
Even to think how quick to death I run;
Scarce, in the orient heaven, yon mountain crest
Smiles in the sun's first ray,
When, in the adverse west,
His long round run, we see his light decay.
So small of life the space,
So frail and clogg'd with woe,
To mortal man below,
That, when I find me from that beauteous face
Thus torn by fate's decree,
Unable at a wish with her to be,
So poor the profit that old comforts give,
I know not how I brook in such a state to live.

Each place offends, save where alone I see
Those eyes so sweet and bright,
Which still shall bear the key
Of the soft thoughts I hide from other sight;
And, though hard exile harder weighs on me,
Whatever mood betide,
I ask no theme beside,
For all is hateful that I since have seen.
What rivers and what heights,
What shores and seas between
Me rise and those twin lights,
Which made the storm and blackness of my days
One beautiful serene,
To which tormented Memory still strays:
Free as my life then past from ev'ry care,
So hard and heavy seems my present lot to bear.

Alas ! self-parleying thus, I but renew
The warm wish in my mind,
Which first within it grew
The day I left my better half behind :
If by long absence love is quench'd, then who
Guides *me* to the old bait,
Whence all my sorrows date ?
Why rather not my lips in silence seal'd ?
By finest crystal ne'er
Were hidden tints reveal'd
So faithfully and fair,
As my sad spirit naked lays and bare
Its every secret part,
And the wild sweetness thrilling in my heart,
Through eyes which, restlessly, o'erfraught with tears,
Seek her whose sight alone with instant gladness cheers.

Strange pleasure !—yet so often that within
The human heart to reign
Is found—to woo and win
Each new brief toy that men most sigh to gain :
And I am one from sadness who relief
So draw, as if it still
My study were to fill
These eyes with softness, and this heart with grief :
As weighs with me in chief
Nay rather with sole force,
The language and the light
Of those dear eyes to urge me on that course,
So where its fullest source
Long sorrow finds, I fix my often sight,
And thus my heart and eyes like sufferers be,
Which in love's path have been twin pioneers to me.

The golden tresses which should make, I ween,
The sun with envy pine ;
And the sweet look serene
Where love's own rays so bright and burning shine,

That, ere its time, they make my strength decline,
Each wise and truthful word,
Rare in the world, which late
She smiling gave, no more are seen or heard.
But this of all my fate
Is hardest to endure
That here I am denied
The gentle greeting, angel-like and pure,
Which still to virtue's side
Inclin'd my heart with modest magic lure;
So that, in sooth, I nothing hope again
Of comfort more than this how best to bear my pain.

And—with fit ecstasy my loss to mourn—
The soft hand's snowy charm,
The finely rounded arm,
The winning ways, by turns, that quiet scorn,
Chaste anger, proud humility adorn,
The fair young breast that shrin'd
Intellect pure and high,
Are now all hid the rugged Alp behind.
My trust were vain to try
And see her ere I die,
For, tho' awhile he dare
Such dreams indulge, Hope ne'er can constant be,
But falls back in despair
Her, whom Heav'n honours, there again to see,
Where virtue, courtesy in her best mix,
And where so oft I pray my future home to fix.

My Song! if thou shalt see,
Our common Lady in that dear retreat,
We both may hope that she
Will stretch to thee her fair and fav'ring hand,
Whence I so far am bann'd;
—Touch, touch it not, but, rev'rent at her feet,
Tell her I will be there with earliest speed,
A man of flesh and blood, or else a spirit freed.

SONNET XXX.

He complains of the veil and hand of Laura, that they deprive him of the sight of her fine eyes.

ORSO, my friend, was never stream, nor lake,
 Nor sea in whose broad lap all rivers fall,
 Nor shadow of high hill, or wood, or wall,
 Nor heav'n obscuring clouds which torrents make,
 Nor other obstacles my grief so wake,
 Whatever most that lovely face may pall,
 As, hiding the bright eyes which me enthrall,
 That veil which bids my heart "*Now burn or break.*"
 And, whether by humility or pride,
 Their glance, extinguishing mine ev'ry joy,
 Conducts me prematurely to my tomb:
 Also my soul by one fair hand is tried,
 Cunning and careful ever to annoy,
 'Gainst my poor eyes a rock that has become.

SONNET XXXI.

Blamed for having so long delayed to visit her, he excuses himself.

So much I fear to encounter her bright eye,
 Always in which my death and Love reside,
 That, as a child the rod, its glance I fly,
 Tho' long the time has been since first I tried;
 And ever since, so wearisome or high,
 No place has been where 'strong will has not hied,
 Her shunning, at whose sight my senses die,
 And, cold as marble, I am laid aside:
 Wherefore if I return to see you late
 Sure 'tis no fault, unworthy of excuse,
 That from my death awhile I held aloof:
 At all to turn to what men shun, their fate,
 And from such fear my harass'd heart to loose,
 Of its true faith are ample pledge and proof.

SONNET XXXII.

He asks from a friend the loan of the works of St. Augustin, to help him in a certain literary labour which he had then in hand.

IF Love or Death no obstacle entwine
 With the new web which here my fingers fold,
 And if I 'scape from beauty's tyrant hold
 While natural truth with truth reveal'd I join,
 Perchance a work so double will be mine
 Between our modern style and language old,
 That (timidly I speak, with hope tho' bold)
 Even to Rome its growing fame may shine:
 But, since, our labour to perfect at last
 Some of the blessed threads are absent yet
 Which our dear father plentifully met,
 Wherefore to me thy hands so close and fast
 Against their use? Be prompt of aid and free,
 And rich our harvest of fair things shall be.

SONNET XXXIII.

When Laura is away, the heavens grow dark around, and storms arise.

WHEN from its proper soil the tree is mov'd
 Which Phœbus lov'd erewhile in human form,
 Grim Vulcan at his labour sighs and sweats,
 Renewing ever the dread bolts of Jove,
 Who thunders now, now speaks in snow and rain,
 Nor Julius honoureth than Janus more:
 Earth moans, and far from us the sun retires
 Since his dear mistress here no more is seen.
 Then Mars and Saturn, cruel stars, resume
 Their hostile rage: Orion arm'd with clouds
 The helm and sails of storm-tost seamen breaks.
 To Neptune and to Juno and to us
 Vext Æolus proves his pow'r, and makes us feel
 How parts the fair face angels long expect.

SONNET XXXIV.

Her return gladdens the earth and calms the sky.

BUT when her sweet smile, modest and benign,
No longer hides from us its beauties rare,
At the spent forge his stout and sinewy arms
Plieth that old Sicilian smith in vain,
For from the hands of Jove his bolts are taken
Temper'd in Ætna to extremest proof;
And his cold sister by degrees grows calm
And genial in Apollo's kindling beams.
Moves from the rosy west a summer breath,
Which safe and easy wafts the seaward bark,
And wakes the sweet flow'rs in each grassy mead.
Malignant stars on ev'ry side depart,
Dispers'd before that bright enchanting face,
For which already many tears are shed.

SONNET XXXV.

The grief of Phœbus at the loss of his love.

NINE times already had Latona's son
Look'd from the highest balcony of heav'n
For her, who whilom wak'd his sighs in vain,
And sighs as vain now wakes in other breasts;
Then seeking wearily, nor knowing where
She dwelt, or far or near, and why delay'd,
He show'd himself to us as one, insane
For grief, who cannot find some lov'd lost thing:
And thus, for clouds of sorrow held aloof,
Saw not the fair face turn, which, if I live,
In many a page shall prais'd and honour'd be;
The misery of her loss so chang'd her mien
That her bright eyes were dimm'd, for once, with tears,
Thereon its former gloom the air resum'd.

SONNET XXXVI.

Some have wept for their worst enemies, but Laura deigns him not a single tear.

HE who for empire at Pharsalia threw,
 Red'ning its beauteous plain with civil gore,
 As Pompey's corse his conq'ring soldiers bore,
 Wept when the well-known features met his view:
 The shepherd youth, who fierce Goliath slew,
 Had long rebellious children to deplore,
 And bent, in gen'rous grief, the brave Saul o'er
 His shame and fall when proud Gilboa knew:
 But you, whose cheek with pity never pal'd,
 Who still have shields at hand to guard you well
 Against Love's bow, which shoots its darts in vain,
 Behold me by a thousand deaths assail'd,
 And yet no tears of thine compassion tell,
 But in those bright eyes anger and disdain.

SONNET XXXVII.

Laura at her looking-glass.

MY foe, in whom you see your own bright eyes,
 Ador'd by Love and Heav'n with honour due,
 With beauties not its own enamours you,
 Sweeter and happier than in mortal guise.
 Me, by its counsel, Lady, from your breast,
 My chosen cherish'd home, your scorn expell'd
 In wretched banishment, perchance not held
 Worthy to dwell where you alone should rest.
 But were I fasten'd there with strongest keys,
 That mirror should not make you, at my cost,
 Severe and proud yourself alone to please.
 Remember how Narcissus erst was lost!
 His course and thine to one conclusion lead,
 Of flow'r so fair tho' worthless here the mead.

SONNET XXXVIII.

Another invective against looking-glasses.

THE gold and pearls, the lily and the rose
 Which weak and dry in winter wont to be,
 Are rank and pois'nous arrow-shafts to me,
 As my sore-stricken bosom aptly shows:
 Thus all my days now sadly shortly close,
 For seldom with great grief long years agree;
 But in that fatal glass most blame I see,
 That weary with your oft self-liking grows:
 It on my lord plac'd silence, when my suit
 He would have urg'd, but, seeing your desire
 End in yourself alone, he soon was mute.
 'Twas fashion'd in Hell's wave and o'er its fire,
 And tinted in eternal Lethe: thence
 The spring and secret of my death commence.

SONNET XXXIX.

He resolves to look again on her bright eyes, without which he cannot live.

BECAUSE the pow'rs that take their life from you
 Already had I felt within decay,
 And because Nature, death to shield or slay,
 Arms ev'ry animal with instinct true,
 To my long-curb'd desire the rein I threw,
 And turn'd it in the old forgotten way,
 Where fondly it invites me night and day,
 Tho', 'gainst its will, another I pursue.
 And thus it led me back, asham'd and slow,
 To see those eyes with love's own lustre rife,
 Which I am watchful never to offend:
 Thus may I live perchance awhile below;
 One glance of yours such pow'r has o'er my life
 Which sure, if I oppose desire, shall end.

SONNET XL.

His heart is all in flames, but his tongue is mute in her presence.

IF fire was never yet by fire subdued,
 If never flood fell dry by frequent rain,
 But, like to like, if each by other gain,
 And contraries are often mutual food ;
 Love, who our thoughts controllest in each mood,
 Thro' whom two bodies thus one soul sustain,
 How, why in her, with such unusual strain
 Make the want less by wishes long renew'd ?
 Perchance, as falleth the broad Nile from high,
 Deaf'ning with his great voice all nature round,
 And as the sun still dazzles the fix'd eye,
 So with itself desire in discord found
 Loses in its impetuous object force,
 As the too frequent spur oft checks the course.

SONNET XLI.

When he would ask pity, words, tears and sighs all fail him at her sight.

WITH all my pow'r, lest falsehood should invade,
 I guarded thee and still thy honour sought,
 Ungrateful tongue ! who honour ne'er hast brought,
 But still my care with rage and shame repaid :
 For, tho' to me most requisite, thine aid,
 When mercy I would ask, availeth nought,
 Still cold and mute, and e'en to words if wrought
 They seem as sounds in sleep by dreamers made.
 And ye, sad tears, o' nights, when I would fain
 Be left alone, my sure companions, flow,
 But, summon'd for my peace, ye soon depart :
 Ye too, mine anguish'd sighs, so prompt to pain,
 Then breathe before her brokenly and slow,
 And my face only speaks my suff'ring heart.

CANZONE V.

Night brings rest and comfort to all others, but not to him.

AT the calm hour when in the golden west,
Elsewhere to shed his waited welcome ray,
Declines, with swifter flight, the orb of day:
Haply, in distant clime, some pilgrim lone,
Worn with the way, by load of years opprest,
With hurried pace, and anxious, journeys on:
Till, reach'd the spot of rest,
Where, for the day, her labours close,
Her staff and scrip aside she throws,
And learns, in pleasing slumber, to forget
The pains and peril thro' the past day met;
—But ah! to me each grief, that morning's light
Awoke, severer grows
When Heav'n's eternal lamp sinks from my baffled sight.

When as the sun his fiery chariot bends
With headlong course, and the cool even brings,
And deeper shade each lofty mountain flings;
Should'ring his tools, the thrifty peasant wends
Him cheerly homeward, and with carol gay
Casts from his bosom ev'ry care away;
There soon his humble board
With plain yet priceless food is stor'd,
Such as erst fed our simpler sires,
Whose ways the world abandons yet admires.
His hours in pleasure let who can employ,
To me, alas! no hour was ever known
Of peace, much less of joy,
However the spheres roll'd, whatever planet shone.

What time the shepherd views with less'ning ray
The world's great light in the blue sea decay,

And thickens o'er the east the twilight gloom,
Rising, his snowy herd he careful counts
With polish'd crook, then, from the crystal founts,
Cool groves and valleys gently guides them home:
There, from the world remote,
Content, in cottage, or in cave
Where lightly o'er him green boughs wave,
He sinks to sleep without a care or thought.
'Tis then, O cruel Love, that, sway'd by thee,
Returns of the coy fair who mars my ease
Act, accent, air, tho' she,
Untouch'd, or coldly spurns thy power, or wisely flees.

Oft, too, at set of sun, in haven lone,
On the hard deck, their rude cloaks o'er them thrown,
In careless sleep the weary sailors lie; .
But I—though in the ocean quench'd his light,
Fair Spain and proud Granada wraps in night,
And dark Morocco's shores and Calpe high,
Tho' all which lives around,
Briefly, in quiet slumber bound,
Forget the sting, the sense of ill—
Find to my stubborn torments no relief:
Each day that dawns but aggravates my grief.
Thus have ten years past over me; thus still
My passion burns; indeed
I know not, and scarce hope that I shall e'er be freed.

Yet, yet once more, for words allay my pain,
When I at eve the loosen'd oxen see
Returning slowly from the furrow'd plain,
Why, from my sighs, is rest denied to me?
Why still condemn'd to drag my heavy load?
Why, day and night, mine eyes with tears o'erflowed?
Ah me! on that sweet face,
When first 'twas theirs its charms to trace,

Why did so long my fond gaze stay?
Why? but to stamp its beauties on the heart,
Thence never to be raz'd by force or art,
Till in the cold grave where we all must wend,
Insensate it decay;
Tho' yet I know not well if there my woe shall end.

My Song! if to have been
From morn to eve with me
Has made thee of my side to be,
Thou wilt not wish in public to be seen;
And others' praises little care can bring;
Amid the hills suffice thee with one thought,
How fiercely I have caught
Fire from that fatal flint to which I ever cling!

SONNET XLII.

He longs to be changed even into a rock, that so he might be free from a life
of torment.

HAD but the light which dazzled them afar
Drawn but a little nearer to mine eyes,
Methinks I would have wholly chang'd my form,
Ev'n as in Thessaly her form she chang'd:
But if I cannot lose myself in her
More than I have—small mercy tho' it won—
I would to-day in aspect thoughtful be,
Of harder stone than chisel ever wrought,
Of adamant, or marble cold and white,
Perchance thro' terror, or of jasper rare
And therefore priz'd by the blind greedy crowd.
Then were I free from this hard heavy yoke
Which makes me envy Atlas, old and worn,
Who with his shoulders brings Morocco night.

MADRIGALE I.

A picture.

NOT Dian to her lover was more dear,
When fortune 'mid the waters cold and clear,
Gave him her naked beauties all to see,
Than seem'd the rustic ruddy nymph to me,
Who, in yon flashing stream, the light veil lav'd,
Whence Laura's lovely tresses lately wav'd;
I saw, and thro' me felt an am'rous chill,
Tho' summer burn, to tremble and to thrill.

CANZONE VI.

To Rienzi, beseeching him to restore to Rome her ancient liberty.

SPIRIT heroic! who with fire divine
Kindlest those limbs, awhile which pilgrim hold
On earth a Chieftain, gracious, wise and bold;
Since, rightly, now the rod of state is thine
Rome and her wand'ring children to confine,
And yet reclaim her to the old good way:
To thee I speak, for elsewhere not a ray
Of virtue can I find, extinct below,
Nor one who feels of evil deeds the shame.
Why Italy still waits, and what her aim
I know not, callous to her proper woe,
Indolent, aged, slow,
Still will she sleep? Is none to rouse her found?
O that my wak'ning hands were thro' her tresses wound!

So grievous is the spell, the trance so deep,
Loud tho' we call, my hope is faint that e'er
She yet will waken from her heavy sleep:
But not, methinks, without some better end
Was this our Rome entrusted to thy care,
Who surest may revive and best defend.

Fearlessly then upon that rev'rend head,
'Mid her dishevell'd locks, thy fingers spread,
And lift at length the sluggard from the dust;
I, day and night, who her prostration mourn,
For this, in thee, have fix'd my certain trust,
That, if her sons yet turn,
And their eyes ever to true honour raise,
The glory is reserv'd for thy illustrious days!

Her ancient walls, which still with fear and love
The world admires, whene'er it calls to mind
The days of Eld, and turns to look behind;
Her hoar and cavern'd monuments above
The dust of men, whose fame, until the world
In dissolution sink, can never fail;
Her all, that in one ruin now lies hurl'd,
Hopes to have heal'd by thee its ev'ry ail.
O faithful Brutus! noble Scipios dead!
To you what triumph, where ye now are blest,
If of our worthy choice the fame have spread:
And how his laurell'd crest,
Will old Fabricius rear, with joy elate,
That his own Rome again shall beauteous be and great!

And, if for things of earth its care Heav'n show,
The souls who dwell above in joy and peace,
And their mere mortal frames have left below,
Implore thee this long civil strife may cease,
Which kills all confidence, nips ev'ry good,
Which bars the way to many a roof, where men
Once holy, hospitable liv'd, the den
Of fearless rapine now and frequent blood,
Whose doors to virtue only are denied.
While beneath plunder'd Saints, in outrag'd fanes
Plots Faction, and Revenge the altar stains;
And, contrast sad and wide,
The very bells which sweetly wont to fling
Summons to pray'r and praise now Battle's tocsin ring!

Pale weeping women, and a friendless crowd
Of tender years, infirm and desolate Age,
Which hates itself and its superfluous days,
With each blest order to religion vow'd,
Whom works of love thro' lives of want engage,
To thee for help their hands and voices raise ;
While our poor panic-stricken land displays
The thousand wounds which now so mar her frame,
That e'en from foes compassion they command ;
Or more if Christendom thy care may claim,
Lo ! God's own house on fire, while not a hand
Moves to subdue the flame :
—Heal thou these wounds, this feverish tumult end,
And on the holy work Heaven's blessing shall descend !

Often against our marble Column high
Wolf, Lion, Bear, proud Eagle, and base Snake
Even to their own injury insult show'r ;
Lifts against these and theirs her mournful cry,
The noble Dame who calls thee here to break
Away the evil weeds which will not flow'r.
A thousand years and more ! and gallant men
There fix'd her seat in beauty and in pow'r ;
The breed of patriot hearts has failed since then !
And, in their stead, upstart and haughty now,
A race, which ne'er to her in rev'rence bends,
Her husband, father thou !
Like care from thee and counsel she attends,
As o'er his other works the Sire of all extends.

'Tis seldom e'en that with our fairest schemes
Some adverse fortune will not mix, and mar
With instant ill ambition's noblest dreams ;
But thou, once ta'en thy path, so walk that I
May pardon her past faults, great as they are.
If now at least she give herself the lie.

For never, in all memory, as to thee,
 To mortal man so sure and straight the way
 Of everlasting honour open lay,
 For thine the pow'r and will, if right I see,
 To lift our empire to its old proud state.

Let this thy glory be!

*They succour'd her when young, and strong, and great,
 He, in her weak old age, ward'd the stroke of Fate.*

Forth on thy way! my Song, and, where the bold
 Tarpeian lifts his brow, shouldst thou behold,
 Of others' weal more thoughtful than his own,
 The chief, by general Italy rever'd,
 Tell him from me, to whom he is but known
 As one to Virtue and by Fame endear'd,
 Till stamp't upon his heart the sad truth be,
 That, *day by day to thee,*
With suppliant attitude and streaming eyes,
For justice and relief our seven-hill'd city cries.

MADRIGALE II.

A love journey—danger in the path—he turns back.

BRIGHT in whose face Love's conquering ensign stream'd,
 A foreign fair so won me, young and vain,
 That of her sex all others worthless seem'd:
 Her as I follow'd o'er the verdant plain,
 I heard a loud voice speaking from afar,
 "*How lost in these lone woods his footsteps are!*"
 Then paused I, and, beneath the tall beech shade,
 All wrapt in thought, around me well survey'd,
 Till, seeing how much danger block'd my way,
 Homeward I turn'd me tho' at noon of day.

BALLATA III.

He thought himself freed from love, but is more than ever entangled.

THAT fire for ever which I thought at rest,
Quench'd in the chill blood of my ripen'd years,
Awakes new flames and torment in my breast.

Its sparks were never all, from what I see,
Extinct, but merely slumb'ring, smoulder'd o'er;
Haply this second error worse may be,

For, by the tears, which I, in torrents, pour,
Grief, thro' these eyes, distill'd from my heart's core,
Which holds within itself the spark and bait,
Remains not as it was but grows more great.

What fire, save mine, had not been quench'd and kill'd
Beneath the flood these sad eyes ceaseless shed?

Struggling 'mid opposites—so Love has will'd—

Now here, now there, my vain life must be led,
For in so many ways his snares are spread,
When most I hope him from my heart expell'd
Then most of her fair face its slave I'm held.

SONNET XLIII.

The deceitfulness of hope.

COUNTING the hours, lest I myself mislead

By blind desire wherewith my heart is torn,
E'en while I speak away the moments speed,

To me and pity which alike were sworn.

What shade so cruel as to blight the seed

Whence the wish'd fruitage should so soon be born?

What beast within my fold has leapt to feed?

What wall is built between the hand and corn?

Alas! I know not, but, if right I guess,

Love to such joyful hope has only led

To plunge my weary life in worse distress;

And I remember now what once I read,

Until the moment of his full release

Man's bliss begins not, nor his troubles cease.

SONNET XLIV.

Small are the sweets, but plentiful the bitters of Love.

LATE to arrive my fortunes are and slow—
 Hopes are unsure, desires ascend and swell,
 Suspense, expectancy in me rebel—
 But swifter to depart than tigers go.
 Tepid and dark shall be the cold pure snow,
 The ocean dry, its fish on mountains dwell,
 The sun set in the East, by that old well
 Alike whence Tigris and Euphrates flow
 Ere in this strife I peace or truce shall find,
 Ere Love or Laura practise kinder ways,
 Sworn friends, against me wrongfully combin'd.
 After such bitters if some sweet allays,
 Balk'd by long fasts my palate spurns the fare,
 Sole grace from them that falleth to my share.

SONNET XLV.

To a friend with some presents.

THY weary check that channel'd sorrow shows,
 My much lov'd lord, upon the one repose;
 More careful of thyself against Love be,
 Tyrant who smiles his vot'ries wan to see;
 And with the other close the left-hand path
 Too easy entrance where his message hath;
 In sun and storm thyself the same display,
 Because time faileth for the lengthen'd way.
 And, with the third, drink of the precious herb
 Which purges ev'ry thought that would disturb,
 Sweet in the end tho' sour at first in taste:
 But me enshrine where your best joys are plac'd,
 So that I fear not the grim bark of Styx,
 If with such pray'r of mine pride do not mix.

BALLATA IV.

He will always love her, though denied the sight of her bright eyes and fine hair.

THO' barr'd from all which led me first to love
By coldness or caprice,
Not yet from its firm bent can passion cease!
The snare was set amid those threads of gold;
To which Love bound me fast;
And from those bright eyes melted the long cold
Within my heart that pass'd;
So sweet the spell their sudden splendour cast,
Its single memory still
Deprives my soul of ev'ry other will.

But now, alas! from me of that fine hair
Is ravish'd the dear sight;
The lost light of those twin stars, chaste as fair,
Saddens me in her flight;
But, since a glorious death wins honour bright,
By death, and not thro' grief,
Love from such chain shall give at last relief.

SONNET XLVL

Imprecation against the Laurel.

THE graceful tree I lov'd so long and well,
Ere its fair boughs in scorn my flame declin'd,
Beneath its shade encourag'd my poor mind
To bud and bloom, and 'mid its sorrow swell.
But now, my heart secure from such a spell,
Alas from friendly it has grown unkind!
My thoughts entirely to one end confin'd,
Their painful suff'rings how I still may tell.
What should he say, the sighing slave of love,
To whom my later rhymes gave hope of bliss,
Who for that laurel has lost all—but this?
*May poet never pluck thee more, nor Jove
Exempt; but may the sun still hold in hate
On each green leaf till blight and blackness wait.*

SONNET XLVII.

He blesses everything connected with his love.

O BLESSED be the day, the month, and year,
 The season, time, the hour and minute when,
 The clime, the spot where on my raptur'd ken
 Thy sweet form beam'd my gloomy life to cheer;
 And O be that delicious tumult blest,
 Which then proclaim'd my heart love's future slave;
 Blest be the bow which aim'd, the dart which gave
 The mortal wound which pierc'd my callous breast.
 With sighs, and tears, and wild desires tho' bought,
 Blest be the change I feel, and blest thy name
 So oft upon my lips, the lays which brought,
 In praising thee, their humble minstrel fame;
 Blest be my nightly dream, my daily thought
 Which, thine alone, the world can never claim.

SONNET XLVIII.

Conscious of his folly, he prays God to turn him to a better life.

FATHER of Heav'n! despite my days all lost,
 After my nights in doating folly spent
 With that fierce passion which my bosom rent
 At sight of her, too lovely for my cost;
 Vouchsafe at length that, by thy grace, I turn
 To wiser life, and enterprise more fair,
 So that my cruel foe, in vain his snare
 Set for my soul, may his defeat discern.
 Already Lord! th' elev'nth year circling wanes
 Since first beneath his tyrant yoke I fell
 Who still is fiercest where we least rebel:
 Pity my undeserv'd and ling'ring pains,
 To holier thoughts my wand'ring sense restore,
 How on this day his cross thy Son our Saviour bore.

BALLATA V.

His life is in her hands; her kind salute saved him from death.

LATE as those eyes on my sunk cheek inclin'd,
 Whose paleness to the world seems of the grave,
 Compassion mov'd you to that greeting kind,
 Whose soft smile to my worn heart spirit gave.

The poor frail life which yet to me is left
 Was of your beauteous eyes the liberal gift,
 And of that voice angelical and mild;
 My present state deriv'd from them I see;
 As the rod quickens the slow sullen child,
 So waken'd they the sleeping soul in me.
 Thus, Lady, of my true heart both the keys
 You hold in hand, and yet your captive please:
 Ready to sail wherever winds may blow,
 By me most priz'd whate'er to you I owe.

SONNET XLIX.

He entreats Laura not to hate her home, his heart.

IF, but by angry and disdainful sign,
 By the averted head and downcast sight,
 By readiness beyond thy sex for flight,
 Deaf to all pure and worthy pray'rs of mine,
 Thou canst, by these or other arts of thine,
 Scape from my breast—where Love on slip so slight
 Grafts ev'ry day new boughs—of such despight
 A fitting cause I then might well divine:
 For gentle plant in arid soil to be
 Seems little suited: so it better were,
 And this e'en nature dictates, thence to stir.
 But since thy destiny prohibits thee
 Elsewhere to dwell, be this at least thy care
 Not always to sojourn in hatred there.

SONNET L.

He prays that some part of his love may be given to Laura.

ALAS! this heart by me was little known
 In those first days when Love its depths explor'd,
 Where by degrees he made himself the lord
 Of my whole life, and claim'd it as his own:
 I did not think, that, thro' his pow'r alone,
 A heart time-steel'd, and so with valour stor'd,
 Such proof of failing firmness could afford,
 And fell by wrong self-confidence o'erthrown.
 Henceforward all defence too late will come,
 Save this, to prove, enough or little, here
 If to these mortal pray'rs Love lend his ear.
 Not now my pray'r—nor can such e'er have room—
 That with more mercy he consume my heart
 But in the fire that she may bear her part.

SESTINA III.

He compares Laura to winter, and foresees that she will always be the same.

THE overcharged air, the impending cloud,
 Compress'd together by impetuous winds,
 Must presently discharge themselves in rain;
 Already as of crystal are the streams,
 And, for the fine grass late that cloth'd the vales,
 Is nothing now but the hoar frost and ice.

And I within my heart, more cold than ice,
 Of heavy thoughts have such a hov'ring cloud,
 As sometimes rears itself in these our vales,
 Lowly, and landlock'd against amorous winds,
 Environ'd everywhere with stagnant streams,
 When falls from soft'ning heav'n the smaller rain.

Lasts but a brief while ev'ry heavy rain;
And summer melts away the snows and ice,
When proudly roll the accumulated streams:
Nor ever hid the heav'ns so thick a cloud,
Which, overtaken by the furious winds,
Fled not from the first hills and quiet vales.

But ah! what profit me the flow'ring vales;
Alike I mourn in sunshine and in rain,
Suff'ring the same in warm and wintry winds;
For only then my Lady shall want ice
At heart, and on her brow th' accustom'd cloud,
When dry shall be the seas, the lakes, and streams.

While to the sea descend the mountain streams,
As long as wild beasts love umbrageous vales,
O'er those bright eyes shall hang th' unfriendly cloud
My own that moistens with continual rain;
And in that lovely breast be harden'd ice
Which forces still from mine so dolorous winds.

Yet well ought I to pardon all the winds
But for the love of one, that 'mid two streams
Shut me among bright verdure and pure ice;
So that I pictur'd then in thousand vales
The shade wherein I was, which heat or rain
Esteemeth not, nor sound of broken cloud.

But fled not ever cloud before the winds,
As I that day: nor ever streams with rain;
Nor ice, when April's sun opens the vales.

SONNET LI.

The fall.

UPON the left shore of the Tyrrhene sea,
 Where broken by the winds the waves complain,
 Sudden I saw that honour'd green again,
 Written for whom so many a page must be :
 Love, ever in my soul his flame who fed,
 Drew me with mem'ries of those tresses fair,
 Whence, in a rivulet, which silent there
 Thro' long grass stole, I fell, as one struck dead.
 Lone as I was, 'mid hills of oak and fir,
 I felt asham'd ; to heart of gentle mould
 Blushes suffice : nor needs it other spur.
 'Tis well at least, breaking bad customs old,
 To change from eyes to feet : from these so wet
 By those if milder April should be met.

SONNET LII.

The view of Rome prompts him to tear himself from Laura, but Love will not allow him.

THE solemn aspect of this sacred shore
 Wakes for the misspent past my bitter sighs,
Pause, wretched man ! and turn as conscience cries,
 Pointing the heav'nward way where I should soar.
 But soon another thought gets mast'ry o'er
 The first, that *so to palter were unwise ;*
E'en now the time, if mem'ry err not, flies
When we should wait our lady-love before.
 I, for his aim then well I apprehend,
 Within me freeze, as one who, sudden, hears
 News unexpected which his soul offend.
 Returns my first thought then, that disappears ;
 Nor know I which shall conquer, but till now
 Within me they contend, nor hope of rest allow !

SONNET LIII.

Though he fled from Love, he falls into the hands of his minions.

FULL well I know that natural wisdom naught,
 Love, 'gainst thy pow'r, in any age prevail'd,
 For snares oft-set, fond oaths that ever fail'd,
 Sore proofs of thy sharp talons long had taught;
 But lately, and in me it wonder wrought—
 With care this new experience be detail'd—
 'Tween Tuscany and Elba as I sail'd
 On the salt sea, it first my notice caught.
 I fled from thy broad hands, and by the way,
 An unknown wand'rer, 'neath the violence
 Of winds and waves and skies, I helpless lay,
 When lo! thy ministers, I knew not whence
 Who quickly made me by fresh stings to feel
 Ill who resists his fate, or would conceal.

CANZONE VII.

He would console himself with song, but, for his own fault, is condemned to weep.

ME wretched! for I know not whither tend
 The hopes which have so long my heart betray'd:
 If none there be who will compassion lend,
 Wherefore to Heav'n these often pray'rs for aid?
 But if, belike, not yet denied to me
 That, ere my own life end,
 These sad notes mute shall be,
 Let not my Lord conceive the wish too free,
 Yet once, amid sweet flow'rs, to touch the string,
"Reason and right it is that love I sing."

Reason indeed there were at last that I
 Should sing, since I have sigh'd so long and late,
 But that for me 'tis vain such art to try,
 Brief pleasures balancing with sorrows great;

Could I, by some sweet verse, but cause to shine
Glad wonder and new joy
Within those eyes divine,
Bliss o'er all other lovers then were mine!
But more, if frankly fondly I could say,
"My Lady asks, I therefore wake the lay."

Delicious dangerous thoughts! that, to begin
A theme so high, have gently led me thus,
You know I ne'er can hope to pass within
Our Lady's heart, so strongly steel'd from us;
She will not deign to look on thing so low,
Nor may our language win
Aught of her care: since Heav'n ordains it so,
And vainly to oppose must irksome grow,
Even as I my heart to stone would turn,
"So in my verse would I be rude and stern."

What do I say? where am I? my own heart
And its misplaced desires alone deceive!
Tho' my view travel utmost heaven athwart
No planet there condemns me thus to grieve:
Why, if the body's veil obscure my sight,
Blame to the stars impart,
Or other things as bright?
Within me reigns my tyrant, day and night,
Since, for his triumph, me a captive took
"Her lovely face, and lustrous eyes' dear look."

While all things else in Nature's boundless reign
Came good from the Eternal Master's mould,
I look for such desert in me in vain:
Me the light wounds that I around behold;
To the true splendour if I turn at last,
My eye would shrink in pain,
Whose own fault o'er it cast
Such film, and not the fatal day long past,
When first her angel beauty met my view,
"In the sweet season when my life was new."

CANZONE VIII

Eulogium on the bright eyes of Laura; the difficulty of praising them properly.

SINCE mortal life is frail,
And my mind shrinks from lofty themes deterr'd,
But small the trust which I in either feel:
Yet hope I that my wail,
Which vainly I in silence would conceal,
Shall, where I wish, where most it ought, be heard.
Beautiful Eyes! wherein Love makes his nest,
To you my song its feeble descant turns,
Slow of itself, but now by passion spurr'd;
Who sings of you is blest,
And from his theme such courteous habit learns
That borne on wings of love,
Proudly he soars each viler thought above;
Encourag'd thus, what long my harass'd heart
Has kept conceal'd I venture to impart.

Yet do I know full well
How much my praise must wrongful prove to you,
But how the great desire can I oppose,
Which ever in me grows,
Since what surpasses thought 'twas mine to view,
Tho' that nor others' wit, nor mine can tell?
Eyes! guilty authors of my cherish'd pain,
That you alone can judge me, well I know,
When from your burning beams I melt like snow,
Haply your sweet disdain
Offence in my unworthiness may see;
Ah! were there not such fear,
To calm the heat with which I kindle near,
'Twere bliss to die: for better far to me
Were death with them than life without could be.

If yet not wasted quite,
So frail a thing before so fierce a flame,

'Tis not from my own strength that safety came ;
But that some fear gives might,
Freezing the warm blood coursing thro' its veins,
To my poor heart better to bear the strife.
O valleys, hills, O forests, floods, and plains,
Witnesses of my melancholy life!
For death how often have ye heard me pray?
Ah miserable fate!
Where flight avails not, tho' 'tis death to stay;
But, if a dread more great
Restrain'd me not, despair would find a way,
Speedy and short, my ling'ring pains to close,
—Hers then the crime who still no mercy shows.

Why thus astray, O grief,
Lead me to speak what I would leave unsaid?
Leave me, where pleasure me impels, to tread:
Not now my song complains
Of you, sweet Eyes, serene beyond belief,
Nor yet of him who binds me in such chains:
Right well may you observe the varying hues
Which o'er my visage oft the tyrant strews,
And thence may guess what war within he makes,
Where night and day he reigns,
Strong in the pow'r which from your light he takes:
Blessed ye were as bright,
Save that from you is barr'd your own dear sight:
Yet often as to me those orbs you turn,
What they to others are you well may learn.

If, as to us who gaze,
Were known to you the charms incredible
And heavenly, of which I sing the praise,
No measur'd joy would swell
Your heart, and haply therefore 'tis denied
Unto the power which doth their motions guide.
Happy the soul for you which breathes the sigh,

Best lights of Heav'n! for whom I grateful bless
This life, which has for me no other joy.

Alas! so seldom why

Give me what I can ne'er too much possess?

Why not more often see

The ceaseless havoc which love makes of me?

And why that bliss so quickly from me steal,

From time to time which my rapt senses feel?

Yes, thanks, great thanks to you!

From time to time I feel thro' all my soul,

A sweetness so unusual and new,

That ev'ry marring care

And gloomy vision thence begins to roll,

So that, from all, one only thought is there.

That, that alone consoles me life to bear:

And could but this my joy endure awhile,

Nought earthly could, methinks, then match my state.

Yet such great honour might

Envy in others, pride in me excite:

Thus still it seems the fate

Of man, that tears should chase his transient smile:

And, checking thus my burning wishes, I

Back to myself return, to muse and sigh.

The amorous anxious thought,

Which reigns within you, flashes so on me,

That from my heart it draws all other joy;

Whence works and words so wrought

Find scope and issue, that I hope to be

Immortal made, altho' all flesh must die.

At your approach ennui and anguish fly;

With your departure they return again:

But memory, on the past which doating dwells,

Denies them entrance then,

So that no outward act their influence tells;

Thus, if in me is nurst

Any good fruit, from you the seed came first:
To you, if such appear, the praise is due,
Barren myself till fertilis'd by you.

Thy strains appease me not, O Song!
But rather fire me still that theme to sing
Where centre all my thoughts—therefore, ere long,
A sister ode to join thee will I bring.

CANZONE IX.

Her eyes encourage him on the path to Heaven.

O GENTLE Lady mine,
A sweet light in thy lustrous eyes I see
Which points to me the way that leads on high;
There too, by long use, I
Mark thy pure spirit from those clear depths shine
Whose empire love alone divides with me.
This sight it is which prompts me to all good,
And to a glorious end my search invites:
This alone keeps me from the vulgar brood:
For never human tongue
Could tell the pow'r which those twin heavenly lights
Over my heart retain,
Or when chill winter spreads with hoar the plain,
Or when, the sun restor'd, the year is young,
Such as it was when first began my pain.

Sometimes I think if there,
Whence the Eternal Ruler of the stars
Has deign'd this marvel to display on earth,
Are other works so fair,
Let him the prison ope where I am set,
And which my pathway to such rare life bars:
Then—thanking nature and my fortunate birth
That I am spar'd for so great blessing yet—

I turn me to mine old accustom'd wars
For her my soul who fraught
With such large hope, that life, which once I deem'd
Weary and sad to be,
Even to me has since most pleasant seem'd,
Filling with a sublime and sweetest thought
The heart of which her bright eyes keep the key.

The lot in life most blest,
That Love's or Fortune's favour e'er could send
To man on earth, whom they would best befriend,
Were gladly changed by me
For one glance of those eyes, whence all my rest
Springeth, as from its root springs ev'ry tree.
Ye dear angelic lamps! my life which bless,
Kindling the fire of pleasure in my breast,
So sweetly which consumes me and destroys;
As into nothingness
Before your lustre ev'ry other dies,
So from my raptur'd heart,
When so much softness over it is thrown,
All viler things, all common thoughts depart,
And love remains, musing on you alone.

If all the bliss, which e'er
Fond hearts of fortunate lovers knew, were brought
Into one sum to what I feel 'twere nought,
When of those bright orbs, where
The raven black with pearly whiteness vies,
Sweetly ye turn the light where young love lies:
And, even from my birth, methinks, by Heaven
Was this kind remedy and comfort wise
To my defects and adverse fortune given.
Me much that veil offends
And the fair hand, which too too oft descends
My greatest joy between
And those bright eyes which ceaseless on me dart,

Passion's pure flame, to cheer my sinking heart,
Which takes its temper from her varying mien.

Alas! then since I see
That mine own natural gifts avail not here,
To make me worthy of a look so dear,
I will essay to be
Such as shall best with the high hopes agree
And with the generous flame wherein I burn.
If to be swift to good, to evil slow,
If scorn for all which the world loves to show,
I can by earnest application learn,
Haply such fame might earn
Me some advantage in her gentle mind.
For sure of my distress
The end, which else my torn heart cannot find,
Shall come from those bright eyes at length more kind,
Last hope the faithful lover left to bless.

Go forth mine Ode! and join thy sister song
Which so late saw the light, and to her say,
I feel within me new ideas throng,
All prompting my fond muse to one more lay.

CANZONE X.

All good is in her eyes: he will never cease to love.

SINCE then by destiny
I am compell'd to sing the strong desire,
Which here condemns me ceaselessly to sigh,
May Love, whose quenchless fire
Excites me, be my guide and point the way,
And in the sweet task modulate my lay:
But gently be it, lest th' o'erpow'ring theme
Inflame and sting me, lest my fond heart may

Dissolve in too much softness, which I deem,
 From its sad state, may be:
 For in me—hence my terror and distress!
 Not now as erst I see
 Judgment to keep my mind's great passion less:
 Nay rather from mine own thoughts melt I so,
 As melts before the summer sun the snow.

At first I fondly thought
 Communing with mine ardent flame to win
 Some brief repose, some time of truce within:
 This was the hope which brought
 Me courage what I suffer'd to explain,
 Now, now it leaves me martyr to my pain:
 But still, continuing mine amorous song,
 Must I the lofty enterprise maintain;
 So pow'rful is the wish that in me glows,
 That reason, which so long
 Restrain'd it, now no longer can oppose.
 Then teach me, Love, to sing
 In such frank guise, that ever if the ear
 Of my sweet foe should chance the notes to hear,
 Pity, I ask no more, may in her spring.

If, as in other times,
 When kindled to true virtue was mankind,
 The genius, energy of man could find
 Entrance in divers climes,
 Mountains and seas o'erpassing, seeking there
 Honour, and culling oft its garland fair,
 Mine were such wish, not mine such need would be,
 From shore to shore my weary course to trace,
 Since God, and Love, and Nature deign for me
 Each virtue and each grace
 In those dear eyes where I rejoice to place.
 In life to them must I
 Turn as to founts whence peace and safety swell:

And e'en were death, which else I fear not, nigh,
Their sight alone would teach me to be well.

As, vext by the fierce wind,
The weary sailor lifts at night his gaze
To the twin lights which still our pole displays,
So, in the storms unkind
Of Love which I sustain, in those bright eyes
My guiding light and only solace lies:
But e'en in this far more is due to theft,
Which, taught by love, from time to time, I make
Of secret glances than their gracious gift:
Yet that, tho' rare and slight,
Makes me from them perpetual model take;
Since first they blest my sight
Nothing of good without them have I tried,
Placing them over me to guard and guide,
Because mine own worth held itself but light.

Never the full effect
Can I imagine, and describe it less
Which o'er my heart those soft eyes still possess!
As worthless I reject
And mean all other joys that life confers,
E'en as all other beauties yield to hers.
A tranquil peace, alloy'd by no distress,
Such as in Heav'n eternally abides,
Moves from their lovely and bewitching smile.
So could I gaze, the while
Love, at his sweet will, governs them and guides,
—E'en tho' the sun were nigh,
Resting above us from his onward wheel—
On her, intensely with undazzled eye,
Nor of myself nor others think or feel.

Ah! that I should desire
Things that can never in this world be won,

Living on wishes hopeless to acquire.
 Yet, were the knot undone,
 Wherewith my weak tongue love is wont to bind,
 Checking its speech, when her sweet face puts on
 All its great charms, then would I courage find,
 Words on that point so apt and new to use,
 As should make weep whoe'er might hear the tale.
 But the old wounds I bear,
 Stamp'd on my tortur'd heart, such pow'r refuse:
 Then grow I weak and pale,
 And my blood hides itself I know not where;
 Nor as I was remain I: hence I know
 Love dooms my death and this the fatal blow.

Farewell my Song! already do I see
 Heavily in my hand the tir'd pen move
 From its long dear discourse with her I love;
 Not so my thoughts from communing with me.

SONNET LIV.

If he sing not of her as she merits, it is the fault of Love, who made her so
 beautiful.

I WEARY me alway with questions keen
 How, why my thoughts ne'er turn from you away,
 Wherefore in life they still prefer to stay,
 When they might flee this sad and painful scene,
 And how of the fine hair, the lovely mien,
 Of the bright eyes which all my feelings sway,
 Calling on your dear name by night and day,
 My tongue ne'er silent in their praise has been,
 And how my feet not tender are, nor tir'd,
 Pursuing still with many a useless pace
 Of your fair footsteps the elastic trace;
 And whence the ink, the paper whence acquir'd,
 Fill'd with your mem'ries: if in this I err,
 Not art's defect but Love's own fault it were.

SONNET LV.

He comforts himself that he is never weary in praising the eyes of his Lady.

THE bright eyes which so struck my fenceless side
 That they alone which harm'd can heal the smart,
 Beyond or pow'r of herbs or magic art,
 Or stone which oceans from our shores divide,
 The chance of other love have so denied
 That one sweet thought alone contents my heart,
 From following which, if ne'er my tongue depart
 Pity the guided tho' you blame the guide.
 These are the bright eyes which, in ev'ry land
 But most in its own shrine, my heart, ador'd,
 Have spread the triumphs of my conqu'ring lord;
 These are the same bright eyes which ever stand
 Burning within me, e'en as vestal fires,
 In singing which my fancy never tires.

SONNET LVI.

Love's chains are dear to him.

BY promise fair and artful flattery
 Me Love contriv'd in prison old to snare,
 And gave the keys to her my foe in care,
 Who in self-exile dooms me still to lie.
 Alas! his wiles I knew not until I
 Was in their pow'r, so sharp yet sweet to bear,
 (Man scarce will credit it altho' I swear)
 That I regain my freedom with a sigh,
 And, as true suff'ring captives ever do,
 Carry of my sore chains the greater part,
 And on my brow and eyes so writ my heart
 That when she witnesseth my cheek's wan hue
 A sigh shall own, *If right I read his face,*
Between him and his tomb but small the space!

SONNET LVII.

On Laura's portrait.

HAD Policletus seen her, or the rest
 Who, in past time, won honour in this art,
 A thousand years had but the meaner part
 Shown of the beauty which o'ercame my breast.
 But Simon sure, in Paradise the blest,
 Whence came this noble Lady of my heart,
 Saw her, and took this wond'rous counterpart
 Which should on earth her lovely face attest.
 The work indeed was one, in Heav'n alone
 To be conceived, not wrought by fellow-men
 Over whose souls the body's veil is thrown:
 'Twas done of Grace: and fail'd his pencil when
 To earth he turn'd our cold and heat to bear,
 And felt that his own eyes but mortal were.

SONNET LVIII.

The painter should have given voice and mind to the picture as well as beauty.

WHEN, at my word, the high thought fir'd his mind,
 Within that master-hand which plac'd the pen,
 Had but the painter, in his fair work, then
 Language and intellect to beauty join'd,
 Less 'neath its care my spirit since had pin'd,
 Which worthless held what still pleas'd other men;
 And yet so mild she seems that my fond ken
 Of peace sees promise in that aspect kind.
 When further communing I hold with her
 Benignantly she smiles, as if she heard
 And well could answer to mine ev'ry word: .
 But far o'er mine thy pride and pleasure were,
 Bright, warm and young, Pygmalion, to have prest
 Thine image long and oft, while mine not once has
 blest.

SONNET LIX.

If the ardour of his passion still increase, he must soon die.

IF, of this fourteenth year wherein I sigh,
 The end and middle with its op'ning vie,
 Nor air nor shade can give me now release,
 I feel mine ardent passion so increase:
 For Love, with whom my thought no medium knows,
 Beneath whose yoke I never find repose,
 So rules me thro' these eyes, on mine own ill
 Too often turn'd, but half remains to kill.
 Thus, day by day, I feel me sink apace,
 And yet so secretly none else may trace,
 Save she whose glances my fond bosom tear.
 Scarcely till now this load of life I bear:
 Nor know how long with me will be her stay,
 For death draws near, and hastens life away.

SESTINA IV.

He prays God to guide his frail bark to a safe port.

WHO is resolved to venture his vain life
 On the deceitful wave and 'mid the rocks,
 Alone, unfearing death, in little bark,
 Can never be far distant from his end:
 Therefore betimes he should return to port
 While to the helm yet answers his true sail.

The gentle breezes to which helm and sail
 I trusted, ent'ring on this amorous life,
 And hoping soon to make some better port,
 Have led me since amid a thousand rocks,
 And the sure causes of my mournful end
 Are not alone without but in my bark.

Long cabin'd and confin'd in this blind bark,
I wander'd looking never at the sail,
Which, prematurely, bore me to my end ;
Till He was pleas'd who brought me into life
So far to call me back from those sharp rocks,
That, distantly, at last was seen my port.

As lights at midnight seen in any port,
Sometimes from the main sea by passing bark,
Save when their ray is lost 'mid storms or rocks ;
So I too from above the swollen sail
Saw the sure colours of that other life,
And could not help but sigh to reach my end.

Not that I yet am certain of that end,
For wishing with the dawn to be in port,
Is a long voyage for so short a life :
And then I fear to find me in frail bark,
Beyond my wishes full its ev'ry sail
With the strong wind which drove me on those rocks.

Escape I living from these doubtful rocks,
Or if my exile have but a fair end,
How happy shall I be to furl my sail,
And my last anchor cast in some sure port ;
But ah ! I burn, and, as some blazing bark,
So hard to me to leave my wonted life.

Lord of my end and master of my life,
Before I lose my bark amid the rocks,
Direct to a good port its harass'd sail !

SONNET LX.

He confesses his errors, and would fain devote himself to God.

So weary am I 'neath the constant thrall
 Of mine own vile heart, and the false world's taint,
 That much I fear while on the way to faint,
 And in the hands of my worst foe to fall.
 Well came, ineffably, supremely kind,
 A friend to free me from the guilty bond,
 But too soon upward flew my sight beyond,
 So that in vain I strive his track to find;
 But still his words stamp'd on my heart remain,
All ye who labour, lo! the way in me;
Come unto me, nor let the world detain!
 O that to me, by grace divine, were given
 Wings like a dove, then I away would flee,
 And be at rest, up up from earth to Heaven!

SONNET LXI.

Unless Laura relent, he is resolved to abandon her.

WEARY I never was, nor can be e'er,
 Lady, while life shall last, of loving you,
 But brought, alas! myself in hate to view,
 Perpetual tears have bred a blank despair:
 I wish a tomb, whose marble fine and fair,
 When this tir'd spirit and frail flesh are two,
 May show your name, to which my death is due,
 If e'en our names at last one stone may share.
 Wherefore, if full of faith and love, a heart
 Can, of worst torture short, suffice your hate,
 Mercy at length may visit e'en my smart.
 If otherwise your wrath itself would sate,
 It is deceiv'd: and none will credit show;
 To Love and to myself my thanks for this I owe.

SONNET LXII.

He knows not why he fears Love, having already suffered all its torments.

TILL silver'd o'er by age my temples grow,
 Where Time by slow degrees now plants his grey,
 Safe shall I never be, in danger's way
 While Love still points and plies his fatal bow.
 I fear no more his tortures and his tricks,
 That he will keep me further to ensnare
 Nor ope my heart, that, from without, he there
 His poisonous and ruthless shafts may fix.
 No tears can now find issue from mine eyes,
 But the way there so well they know to win,
 That nothing now the pass to them denies.
 Tho' the fierce ray rekindle me within,
 It burns not all: her cruel and severe
 Form may disturb, not break my slumbers here.

SONNET LXIII.

Dialogue between the Poet and his eyes.

P. WEEP, wretched eyes, accompany the heart
 Which only from your weakness death sustains.
E. Weep? evermore we weep; with keener pains
 For others' error than our own we smart.
P. Love, ent'ring first thro' you an easy part,
 Took up his seat, where now supreme he reigns.
E. We op'd to him the way, but Hope the veins
 First fir'd of him now stricken by death's dart.
P. The lots, as seems to you, scarce equal fall
 'Tween heart and eyes, for you, at first sight, were
 Enamour'd of your common ill and shame.
E. This is the thought which grieves us most of all;
 For perfect judgments are on earth so rare
 That one man's fault is oft another's blame.

SONNET LXIV.

He loves, and will always love, the spot, the time and hour in which he first
became enamoured of Laura.

I ALWAYS lov'd, I love sincerely yet,
And to love more from day to day shall learn,
The charming spot where oft in grief I turn
When Love's severities my bosom fret:
My mind to love the time and hour is set
Which taught it each low care aside to spurn;
She too, of loveliest face, for whom I burn
Bids me her fair life love and sin forget.
Who ever thought to see in friendship join'd,
On all sides with my suff'ring heart to cope,
The gentle enemies I love so well?
Love now is paramount my heart to bind,
And, save that with desire increases hope,
Dead should I lie alive where I would dwell.

SONNET LXV.

Better is it to die happy than to live in pain.

ALWAYS in hate the window shall I bear,
Whence Love has shot on me his shafts at will,
Because not one of them suffic'd to kill:
For death is good when life is bright and fair;
But in this earthly jail its term to outwear
Is cause to me, alas! of infinite ill;
And mine is worse because immortal still,
Since from the heart the spirit may not tear.
Wretched! ere this who surely ought'st to know
By long experience, from his onward course
None can stay Time by flatt'ry or by force.
Oft and again have I addrest it so:
*Mourner, away! he parteth not too soon
Who leaves behind him far his life's calm June.*

SONNET LXVI.

He calls the eyes of Laura foes, because they only keep him in life to torment.

INSTANTLY a good archer draws his bow
 Small skill it needs, e'en from afar, to see
 Which shaft, less fortunate, despis'd may be,
 Which to its destin'd sign will certain go:
 Lady, e'en thus of your bright eyes the blow,
 You surely felt pass straight and deep in me,
 Searching my life, whence—such is fate's decree—
 Eternal tears my stricken heart o'erflow;
 And well I know e'en then your pity said,
Fond wretch! to misery whom passion leads,
Be this the point at once to strike him dead.
 But seeing now how sorrow sorrow breeds,
 All that my cruel foes against me plot,
 For my worse pain, and for my death is not.

SONNET LXVII.

He counsels lovers to flee Love rather than be consumed in its flames.

SINCE my hope's fruit yet faileth to arrive,
 And short the space vouchsaf'd me to survive,
 Betimes of this aware I fain would be,
 Swifter than light or wind from Love to flee:
 And I do flee him, weak albeit and lame
 O' my left side, where passion rack'd my frame.
 Tho' now secure yet bear I on my face
 Of th' amorous encounter signal trace.
 Wherefore I counsel each this way who comes,
 Turn hence your footsteps, and, if Love consumes,
 Think not in present pain his worst is done;
 For, tho' I live, of thousand scapes not one!
 'Gainst Love my enemy was strong indeed—
 Lo! from his wounds e'en she is doom'd to bleed.

SONNET LXVIII.

Who has once been enslaved by Love cannot again be free.

FLEEING the prison which had long detain'd,
 Where Love dealt with me as to him seem'd well,
 Ladies, the time were long indeed to tell,
 How much my heart its new-found freedom pain'd.
 I felt within I could not, so bereav'd,
 Live e'en a day: and, midway, on my eyes
 That traitor rose in so complete disguise,
 A wiser than myself had been deceiv'd:
 Whence oft I've said, deep sighing for the past,
 Alas! the yoke and chains of old to me
 Were sweeter far than thus releas'd to be.
 Me wretched! but to learn mine ill at last;
 With what sore trial must I now forget
 Errors that round my path myself have set.

SONNET LXIX.

Her beauties enamoured him, but even were these gone, his love would remain.

UPON the light breeze flow'd her golden hair,
 In many a mazy ringlet wildly blown,
 And in bright lustre from her fine eyes shone
 The witching glances which are now so rare;
 And true or false, methought she seem'd to wear
 Soft Pity's ensign o'er her fair cheek thrown;
 What marvel then that I, whose breast was sown
 With Love's quick seed, such crop so soon should bear.
 Not mortal seem'd her step the green sward on;
 Her form angelic: and, in each sweet word
 Which from her fell, no human voice was heard.
 A spirit heavenly, a living sun,
 Was what I saw: if such not still are found,
 Now to unbend the bow will never heal the wound.

SONNET LXX.

He comforts a friend whom Death had deprived of his lady-love, and counsels him
to turn his soul to God.

THE lovely lady who was long so dear
To thee, now suddenly is from us gone,
And, for this hope is sure, to Heav'n is flown,
So mild and angel-like her life was here!
Now from her thralldom since thy heart is clear,
Whose either key she, living, held alone,
Follow where she the safe short way has shown,
Nor let aught earthly longer interfere.
Thus disencumber'd from the heavier weight,
The lesser may aside be easier laid,
And the freed pilgrim win the crystal gate;
So teaching us, since all things that are made
Hasten to death, how light must be his soul
Who treads the perilous pass, unscath'd and whole!

SONNET LXXI.

On the death of Cino of Pistoia.

WEEP, gentle ladies, and let Love weep too!
Weep, lovers of all ranks in ev'ry land!
Since he is dead in life who ever plann'd
How to your cause he best might honour do:
For me, these tears, which sorrow deep and true
Forces to flow, may nought their fall withstand,
And may my sighs such courtesy command
To ease my burden'd heart as may be due:
And let the tuneful rhyme, the tender verse
Weep, for their graceful master, Cino dear,
Lately—alas! too soon—from earth is flown:
Weep too Pistoia and her sons perverse,
Ye lose in him your sweetest neighbour here—
And, where he safe has past, let Heav'n rejoice alone!

SONNET LXXII.

He writes what Love had long told him.

WRITE—to my heart Love often times had said—
 Write what thou see'st in letters large of gold,
 That livid are my vot'ries to behold,
 And in a moment made alive and dead.
 Once in thy heart my sovran influence spread
 A public precedent to lovers told;
 Tho' other duties drew thee from my fold,
 I soon reclaim'd thee as thy footsteps fled.
 And if the bright eyes which I show'd thee first,
 If the fair face where most I lov'd to stay,
 Thy young heart's icy hardness when I burst
 Restore to me the bow which all obey,
 Then may thy cheek, which now so smooth appears,
 Be channel'd with my daily drink of tears.

SONNET LXXIII.

He describes the state of two lovers, and returns in thought to his own feelings.

WHEN reaches thro' the eyes the conscious heart
 Its imag'd fate, all other thoughts depart;
 The pow'rs which from the soul their functions take
 A dead weight on the frame its limbs then make.
 From the first miracle a second springs,
 At times the banish'd faculty that brings,
 So fleeing from itself, to some new seat,
 Which feeds revenge and makes e'en exile sweet.
 Thus in both faces the pale tints were rife,
 Because the strength which gave the glow of life
 On neither side was where it wont to dwell—
 I on that day these things remember'd well,
 Of that fond couple when each varying mien
 Told me in like estate what long myself had been.

SONNET LXXIV.

He complains that to him alone is faith hurtful.

COULD I, in melting verse, my thoughts but throw,
 As in my heart their living load I bear,
 No soul so cruel in the world was e'er
 That would not at the tale with pity glow.
 But ye, blest eyes, which dealt me the sore blow,
 'Gainst which nor helm, nor shield avail'd to spare,
 Within, without, behold me poor and bare,
 Tho' never in laments is breath'd my woe.
 But since on me your bright glance ever shines
 Ev'n as a sunbeam thro' transparent glass,
 Suffice then the desire without the lines.
 Faith Peter bless'd and Mary, but alas!
 It proves an enemy to me alone,
 Whose spirit save by you to none is known.

SONNET LXXV.

How, though tired of suffering, he is still compelled to endure the pangs of Love.

WEARY with expectation's endless round,
 And overcome in this long war of sighs,
 I hold desires in hate and hopes despise,
 And ev'ry tie wherewith my breast is bound;
 But the bright face which in my heart profound
 Is stamp'd, and seen where'er I turn mine eyes,
 Compels me where, against my will, arise
 The same sharp pains that first my ruin crown'd.
 Then was my error when the old way quite
 Of liberty was bann'd and barr'd to me:
 He follows ill who pleases but his sight:
 To its own harm my soul ran wild and free,
 Now doom'd at others' will to wait and wend;
 Because *that once* it ventur'd to offend.

SONNET LXXVI.

He deplores his lost liberty and the unhappiness of his present state.

ALAS! fair Liberty, thus left by thee,
 Well hast thou taught my discontented heart
 To mourn the peace it felt, ere yet Love's dart
 Dealt me the wound which heal'd can never be;
 Mine eyes so charm'd with their own weakness grow
 That my dull mind of reason spurns the chain;
 All worldly occupation they disdain,
 Ah! that I should myself have train'd them so.
 Naught, save of her who is my death, mine ear
 Consents to learn; and from my tongue there flows
 No accent save the name to me so dear;
 Love to no other chase my spirit spurs,
 No other path my feet pursue; nor knows
 My hand to write in other praise but hers.

SONNET LXXVII.

He sympathises with his friend Orso at his inability to attend a tournament.

ORSO, a curb upon thy gallant horse
 Well may we place to turn him from his course,
 But who thy heart may bind against its will
 Which honour courts and shuns dishonour still?
 Sigh not! for naught its praise away can take,
 Tho' Fate this journey hinder you to make.
 For, as already voic'd by gen'ral fame,
 Now is it there, and none before it came.
 Amid the camp, upon the day design'd,
 Enough itself beneath those arms to find
 Which youth, love, valour, and near blood concern,
 Crying aloud: *With noble fire I burn,*
As my good lord unwillingly at home,
Who pines and languishes in vain to come.

SONNET LXXVIII.

To a friend, advising him to abandon the love of the world.

FRIEND! since we both sad proofs have often been,
 How false is human hope, how soon it flies,
 Within the Supreme Good, which never cloy,
 Lift then your heart where purer joys are seen.
 This earthly life is as a meadow green,
 Where amid flow'rs and grass the serpent lies,
 And, if its any sight e'er win our eyes,
 'Tis but to leave the soul worse snares between:
 Wherefore, if true you seek to have the mind
 Ready and tranquil for the last great day,
 Follow the few, and shun the common kind.
 Alas! I preach, who practise not: the way
 To others I can point, whence, late and long,
 Myself have wander'd, ever into wrong.

SONNET LXXIX.

Recollections of love.

THAT window where my sun is ever seen,
 Dazzling and bright, and Nature's at the none;
 And that where still, when Boreas rude has blown
 In the short days, the air thrills cold and keen:
 The stone where, at high noon, her seat has been,
 Pensive and parleying with herself alone:
 Haunts where her bright form has its shadow thrown,
 Or trod her fairy foot the carpet green:
 The cruel spot where first Love spoil'd my rest,
 And the new season which, from year to year.
 Ope, on this day, the old wound in my breast:
 The seraph face, the sweet words, chaste and dear,
 Which in my suff'ring heart are deep imprest,
 All melt my fond eyes to the frequent tear.

SONNET LXXX

How vain is the world! though he has hitherto struggled uselessly, he nevertheless hopes to overcome.

ALAS! well know I what sad havoc makes
 Death of our kind, how Fate no mortal spares!
 How soon the world whom once it lov'd forsakes!
 How short the faith it to the friendless bears!
 Much languishment, I see, small mercy wakes;
 For the last day tho' now my heart prepares,
 Love not a whit my cruel prison breaks,
 And still my cheek grief's wonted tribute wears.
 I mark the days, the moments and the hours
 Bear the full years along, nor find deceit.
 Bow'd 'neath a greater force than magic spell.
 For fourteen years have fought with varying pow'rs
 Desire and Reason: and the best shall beat;
 If mortal spirits here can good foretel.

SONNET LXXXI.

The external appearance is not always a true testimony to the heart.

CÆSAR, when Egypt's cringing traitor brought
 The gory gift of Pompey's honour'd head,
 Check'd the full gladness of his instant thought,
 And specious tears of well-feign'd pity shed:
 And Hannibal, when adverse Fortune wrought
 On his afflicted empire evils dread,
 'Mid sham'd and sorrowing friends, by laughter, sought
 To ease the anger at his heart that fed.
 Thus, as the mind its ev'ry feeling hides
 Beneath an aspect contrary, the mien,
 Bright'ning with hope or charg'd with gloom, is seen.
 Thus ever if I sing, or smile betides,
 The outward joy serves only to conceal
 The inner ail and anguish that I feel.

SONNET LXXXII.

To Stephen Colonna, counselling him to follow up his victory over the Orsini

HANNIBAL conquer'd oft but never knew
 The fruits and gain of victory to get,
 Wherefore, dear lord, be wise, take care that yet
 A like misfortune happen not to you.
 Still in their lair the cubs and she-bear, who
 Rough pasturage and sour in May have met,
 With mad rage gnash their teeth and talons whet,
 And vengeance of past loss on us pursue:
 While this new grief disheartens and appals
 Replace not in its sheath your honour'd sword,
 But, boldly following where your fortune calls,
 E'en to its goal be glory's path explor'd,
 Which fame and honour to the world may give
 That e'en for centuries after death will live.

SONNET LXXXIII.

To Pandolpho Malatesta, Lord of Rimini.

THE flow'r, in youth which virtue's promise bore,
 When Love in your pure heart first sought to dwell,
 Now beareth fruit that flow'r which matches well,
 And my long hopes are richly come ashore,
 Prompting my spirit some glad verse to pour
 Where to due honour your high name may swell,
 For what can finest marble truly tell
 Of living mortal than the form he wore?
 Think you great Cæsar's or Marcellus' name,
 That Paulus, Africanus to our days,
 By anvil or by hammer ever came?
 No! frail the sculptor's pow'r for lasting praise:
 Our study, my Pandolpho, only can
 Give immortality of fame to man.

CANZONE XL (See Notes.)

MADRIGALE III.

He allegorically describes how he fell in love.

FROM Heaven an angel upon radiant wings,
 New lighted on that shore so fresh and fair,
 To which, so doom'd, my faithful footstep clings :
 Alone and friendless, when she found me there,
 Of gold and silk a finely woven net,
 Where lay my path, 'mid seeming flow'rs she set ;
 Thus was I caught, and, for such sweet light shone
 From out her eyes, I soon forgot to moan.

SONNET LXXXIV.

After fifteen years of love her eyes are still as powerful as at first.

No hope of respite, of escape no way,
 Her bright eyes wage such constant havoc here ;
 Alas ! excess of tyranny, I fear,
 My doating heart which ne'er has truce will slay :
 Fain would I flee, but ah ! their amorous ray,
 Which day and night on memory rises clear,
 Shines with such pow'r, in this the fifteenth year,
 They dazzle more than in love's early day.
 So wide and far their images are spread
 That wheresoe'er I turn I alway see
 Her, or some sister-light on hers that fed.
 Springs such a wood from one fair laurel tree
 That my old foe with admirable skill
 Amid its boughs misleads me at his will.

SONNET LXXXV.

He gladly turns to the spot where Laura kindly saluted him.

MOST fortunate and fair of spots terrene!
 Where Love I saw her forward footstep stay,
 And turn on me her bright eyes' heav'nly ray,
 Which round them make the atmosphere serene.
 A solid form of adamant, I ween,
 Would sooner shrink in lapse of time away,
 Than from my mind that sweet salute decay,
 Dear to my heart, in memory ever green.
 And oft as I return to view this spot,
 In its fair scenes I'll fondly stoop to seek
 Where yet the traces of her light foot lie.
 But if in valorous heart Love sleepeth not,
 Whene'er you meet her, friend, for me bespeak
 Some passing tears, perchance one pitying sigh.

SONNET LXXXVI.

If Love disturb him, he calms himself by thinking of the eyes and words of Laura.

ALAS! how ceaselessly is urg'd Love's claim,
 By day by night a thousand times I turn
 Where best I may behold the dear lights burn
 Which have immortalis'd my bosom's flame.
 Thus grow I calm, and to such state am brought,
 At noon, at break of day, at vesper-bell,
 I find them in my mind so tranquil dwell,
 I neither think nor care beside for aught.
 The balmy air, which, from her angel mien,
 Moves ever with her winning words and wise,
 Makes wheresoe'er she breathes a sweet serene.
 As 'twere a gentle spirit from the skies,
 Still in these scenes some comfort brings to me,
 Nor elsewhere breathes my harass'd heart so free.

SONNET LXXXVII.

Laura arriving when least expected, he dares not even address her.

As Love his arts in haunts familiar tried,
 Watchful as one expecting war is found,
 Who all foresees and guards the passes round,
 I in the armour of old thoughts relied :
 Turning, I saw a shadow at my side
 Cast by the sun, whose outline on the ground
 I knew for hers, who—be my judgment sound—
 Deserves in bliss immortal to abide.
 I whispered to my heart, *Nay, wherefore fear?*
 But scarcely had the thought arose within
 Than the bright rays in which I burn were here.
 As thunders with the lightning-flash begin,
 So was I struck at once both blind and mute,
 By her dear dazzling eyes and sweet salute.

SONNET LXXXVIII.

Her kind and gentle salutation thrills his heart with pleasure.

SHE, in her face who doth my gone heart wear,
 As lone I sate 'mid love-thoughts dear and true,
 Appear'd before me: to show honour due,
 I rose, with pallid brow and rev'rent air.
 Soon as of such my state she was aware,
 She turn'd on me with look so soft and new
 As, in Jove's greatest fury, might subdue
 His rage, and from his hand the thunders tear.
 I started: on her further way she past,
 Graceful, and speaking words I could not brook,
 Nor of her lustrous eyes the loving look.
 When on that dear salute my thoughts are cast,
 So rich and varied do my pleasures flow,
 No pain I feel, nor evil fear below.

SONNET LXXXIX.

He tells his friend Sennucio what have been and are his thoughts.

I WOULD, my friend, thou should'st the manner know
Which I am treated in, what life is mine:
Still Laura rules me, still I burn and pine,
And as I was of yore I still am so.
I see her low'r in pride, in pity glow,
From hate to love, from glee to gloom incline,
Candour now practise, coyness now refine,
Now scorn and cruelty, now softness show.
Here did she sweetly sing, here graceful sit;
Here did she turn, and there she paus'd awhile;
Here to her bright eyes did my heart submit;
Here did she briefly speak, there softly smile,
Here pal'd her aspect. In such thoughts, alas!
The slave of Love my nights and days I pass.

SONNET XC.

The mere sight of Vaucluse makes him forget the storms of his journey.

FRIEND, on this spot, I life but half endure
(Would I were wholly here and you content)
Where from the storm and wind my course I bent
Which suddenly had left the skies obscure.
Fain would I tell—for here I feel me sure—
Why lightnings now no fear to me present;
And why unmitigated, much less spent,
E'en as before my fierce desires allure.
Soon as I reach'd these realms of love, and saw
Where, sweet and pure, to life my Laura came,
Who calms the air, at rest the thunder lays;
Love in my soul, where she alone gives law
Quench'd the cold fear and kindled the fast flame,
What were it then on her bright eyes to gaze!

SONNET XCI.

Leaving Rome, he only desires peace with Laura and prosperity to Colonna.

FROM impious Babylon, where all shame is dead,
 And ev'ry good is banisht to far climes,
 Nurse of rank errors, centre of worst crimes,
 Haply to lengthen life, I too am fled:
 Alone, at last alone, and here, as led
 At love's sweet will, I posies weave or rhymes,
 Self-parleying, and still on better times
 Wrapt in fond thoughts whence only hope is fed.
 Cares for the world, or fortune I have none,
 Nor much for self, nor any common theme:
 Nor feel I in me, nor without, great heat.
 Two friends alone I ask, and that the one
 More merciful and meek to me may seem,
 The other well as erst, and firm of feet.

SONNET XCII.

Laura turning to salute him, the sun, through jealousy, hid himself behind a cloud.

'TWEEN two fond lovers I a lady spied,
 Virtuous but haughty, and with her that Lord,
 By Gods above and men below ador'd—
 The sun on this, myself upon that side—
 Soon as she found herself the sphere denied
 Of her bright friend, on my fond eyes she pour'd
 A flood of life and joy, which hope restor'd
 Less cold to me will be her future pride.
 Suddenly chang'd itself to cordial mirth
 The jealous fear to which at his first sight
 So high a rival in my heart gave birth;
 As suddenly his sad and rueful plight
 From further scrutiny a small cloud veil'd,
 So much it ruffled him that then he fail'd.

SONNET XCIII.

Wherever he is he sees only Laura.

O'ERFLOWING with the sweets ineffable,
 Which from that lovely face my fond eyes drew,
 What time they seal'd, for very rapture, grew,
 On meaner beauty never more to dwell,
 Whom most I love I left: my mind so well
 Its part, to muse on her, is trained to do,
 None else it sees; what is is not hers to view,
 As of old wont, with loathing I repel.
 In a low valley shut from all around,
 Sole consolation of my heart-deep sighs,
 Pensive and slow, with Love I walk alone:
 Not ladies here, but rocks and founts are found,
 And of that day blest images arise,
 Which my thought shapes where'er I turn mine eyes.

SONNET XCIV.

Could he but see the house of Laura, his sighs might reach her more quickly.

If, which our valley bars, this wall of stone,
 From which its present name we closely trace,
 Were by disdainful nature rais'd, and thrown
 Its back to Babel and to Rome its face;
 Then had my sighs a better pathway known
 To where their hope is yet in life and grace:
 They now go singly, yet my voice all own;
 And, where I send, not one but finds its place.
 There too, as I perceive, such welcome sweet
 They ever find, that none returns again,
 But still delightedly with her remain.
 My grief is from the eyes, each morn to meet—
 Not the fair scenes my soul so long'd to see—
 Toil for my weary limbs and tears for me.

SONNET XCV.

He admits that he is unhappy in his love, but he resolves always to love her.

MY sixteenth year of sighs its course has run,
 I stand alone, already on the brow
 Where Age descends: and yet it seems as now
 My time of trial only were begun.
 'Tis sweet to love, and good to be undone;
 Tho' life be hard, more days may Heav'n allow
 Misfortune to outlive: else Death may bow
 The bright head low my loving praise that won.
 Here am I now who fain would be elsewhere;
 More would I wish and yet no more I would;
 I could no more and yet did all I could:
 And new tears born of old desires declare
 That still I am as I was wont to be,
 And that a thousand changes change not me.

CANZONE XII.

How he had long followed Glory, by whom he was directed to Virtue in preference.

A LADY, lovelier, brighter than the sun,
 Like him superior o'er all time and space,
 Of rare resistless grace,
 Me to her train in early life had won:
 She, from that hour, in act and word and thought,
 —For still the world thus covets what is rare—
 In many ways tho' brought
 Before my search, was still the same coy fair:
 For her alone my plans, from what they were,
 Grew chang'd, since nearer subject to her eyes;
 Her love alone could spur
 My young ambition to each hard emprise:
 So, if in long-wish'd port I e'er arrive,
 I hope, for aye thro' her,
 When others deem me dead, in honour to survive.

Full of first hope, burning with youthful love,
She, at her will, as plainly now appears,
Has led me many years,
But for one end, my nature best to prove:
Oft showing me her shadow, veil, and dress,
But never her sweet face, till I, who right
Knew not her pow'r to bless,
All my green youth for these, contented quite,
So spent, that still the memory is delight:
Since onward yet some glimpse of her is seen,
I now may own, of late,
Such as till then she ne'er for me had been,
She shows herself, shooting thro' all my heart
An icy cold so great
That save in her dear arms it ne'er can thence depart.
Not that in this cold fear I all did shrink,
For still my heart was to such boldness strung
That to her feet I clung,
As if more rapture from her eyes to drink:
And she—for now the veil was ta'en away
Which barr'd my sight—thus spoke me, "Friend, you see
How fair I am, and may
Ask, for your years, whatever fittest be."
"Lady," I said, "so long my love on thee
Has fix'd, that now I feel myself on fire,
What in this state, to shun, and what desire."
She, thereon, with a voice so wond'rous sweet
And earnest look replied,
By turns with hope and fear it made my quick heart beat.
"Rarely has man, in this full crowd below,
E'en partial knowledge of my worth possess,
Who felt not in his breast
At least awhile some spark of spirit glow:
But soon my foe, each germ of good abhorr'd,
Quenches that light, and ev'ry virtue dies,
While reigns some other lord
Who promises a calmer life shall rise:

Love, of your mind, to him that naked lies,
So shows the great desire with which you burn,
That safely I divine
It yet shall win for you an honour'd urn;
Already one of my few friends you are,
And now shall see in sign
A Lady who shall make your fond eyes happier far."

"It may not, cannot be," I thus began;
—When she, "Turn hither, and, in yon calm nook
Upon the Lady look
So seldom seen, so little sought of man!"
I turn'd, and o'er my brow the mantling shame,
Within me as I felt that new fire swell,
Of conscious treason came.
She softly smil'd, "I understand you well;
E'en as the sun's more pow'rful rays dispel
And drive the meaner stars of Heav'n from sight,
So I less fair appear,
Dwindling and darken'd now in her more light;
But not for this I bar you from my train,
As one in jealous fear—
One birth, the elder she, produc'd us, sisters twain."

Meanwhile the cold and heavy chain was burst
Of silence, which a sense of shame had flung
Around my pow'rless tongue,
When I was conscious of her notice first:
And thus I spoke, "If what I hear be true,
Blest be the sire, blessed the natal day
Which grac'd our world with you!
Blest the long years past in your search away!
From the right path if e'er I went astray
It grieves me more than, haply, I can show:
But of your state, if I
Deserve more knowledge, more I long to know."
She paus'd, then, answering pensively, so bent
On me her eloquent eye,
That to my inmost heart her looks and language went.

"As seem'd to our Eternal Father best,
 We two were made immortal at our birth:
 To man so small our worth
 Better on us that death, like yours, should rest.
 Tho' once below'd and lovely, young and bright,
 So slighted are we now, my sister sweet
 Already plumes for flight
 Her wings to bear her to her own old seat;
 Myself am but a shadow thin and fleet;
 Thus have I told you, in brief words, whate'er
 You sought of us to find:
 And now farewell! before I mount in air
 'This favour take, nor fear that I forget."
 Whereat she took and twin'd
 A wreath of laurel green, and round my temples set.

My Song! should any deem thy strain obscure,
 Say, that I care not, and, ere long to hear,
 In certain words and clear,
 Truth's welcome message, that my hope is sure;
 For this alone, unless I widely err
 Of him who set me on the task, I came,
 That others I might stir
 To honourable acts of high and holy aim.

MADRIGALE IV.

A prayer to Love that he will revenge him on that proud and cruel fair.

Now, Love, at length behold a youthful fair,
 Who spurns thy rule, and, mocking all my care,
 'Mid two such foes, is safe and fancy free.
 Thou art well arm'd, 'mid flow'rs and verdure she,
 In simplest robe and natural tresses found,
 Against thee haughty still and harsh to me;
 I am thy thrall: but, if thy bow be sound,
 If yet one shaft be thine, in pity, take
 Vengeance upon her for our common sake.

SONNET XCVI.

He replies to Antonio of Ferrara, who, in a poem, lamented his supposed death.

THOSE pious lines wherein are finely met
 Proofs of high genius and a spirit kind,
 Had so much influence on my grateful mind
 That instantly in hand my pen I set
 To tell you that death's final blow—which yet
 Shall me and ev'ry mortal surely find—
 I have not felt, tho' I too, nearly join'd
 The confines of his realm without regret;
 But I turn'd back again because I read
 Writ o'er the threshold that the time to me
 Of life predestinate not all was fled,
 Tho' its last day and hour I could not see.
 Then once more let your sad heart comfort know,
 And love the living worth which dead it honour'd so.

SONNET XCVII.

That habits are not easily shaken off, although hurtful, he is himself a signal proof.

FOR seventeen summers Heav'n has o'er me roll'd
 Since first I burn'd, nor e'er found respite thence,
 But when to weigh our state my thoughts commence
 I feel amidst the flames a frosty cold.
We change the form not nature is an old
 And truthful proverb: thus, to dull the sense
 Makes not the human feelings less intense;
 The dark shades of our painful veil still hold.
 Alas! alas! will e'er that day appear
 When, my life's flight beholding, I may find
 Issue from endless fire and ling'ring pain,
 The day which, crowning all my wishes here,
 Of that fair face the angel air and kind
 Shall to my longing eyes restore again?

SONNET XCVIII.

Leave-taking.

A TENDER thoughtfulness, a shaded love
 O'er her sweet smile that delicate paleness cast,
 And to my heart with pow'r so sov'reign past
 That instant in my looks warm welcome strove:
 Then knew I how, in Paradise, the blest
 Each other recognise, for in us grew
 Like gentle sympathy which none else knew,
 Seen but by me whose eyes there always rest.
 Ev'ry angelic look and modest grace
 Which ever yet in loving Woman beam'd
 To what I sing would cold and paltry be.
 On earth was bent her bright and gentle face
 And silent said (for so to me it seem'd)
Who takes my faithful friend away from me?

SONNET XCIX.

He knows the causes, but not the cure, of his complaint.

LOVE, Fortune, and my melancholy mind,
 Sick of the present, ling'ring on the past,
 Afflict me so, that envious thoughts I cast
 On those who life's dark shore have left behind.
 Love racks my bosom: Fortune's wintry wind
 Kills ev'ry comfort: my weak mind at last
 Is chaf'd and pines, so many ills and vast
 Expose its peace to constant strifes unkind.
 Nor hope I better days shall turn again;
 But what is left from bad to worse may pass:
 For ah! already life is on the wane.
 Not now of adamant but frail as glass,
 I see my best hopes fall from me or fade,
 And low in dust my fond thoughts broken laid.

CANZONE XIII.

He tries by every means to mitigate his torments, but all in vain.

If powerful as the thought
That my soul's peace destroys,
My tongue such speech, my cheek such hue were taught,
Then she my suit who flies
Its ardour might partake,
And Love, where now he sleeps, to life awake.
Less solitary then
My weary steps would go
Morn, noon and night, o'er mountain, mead and glen,
Less would mine eyes o'erflow,
Burning for her, who, cold herself as snow,
Leaves not the while in me
From the consuming flame one feeling free.

Since Love then me o'ersways,
And robs of reason quite,
I speak in rude and inharmonious lays;
Tho' rarely from the sight
Of foliage, flow'r, or rind,
The natural virtue of the tree we find,
Love, from those lustrous eyes
In whose rich depths he lies,
Rightly may read the secret of my breast;
Whether in bursting sighs,
Or silent tears its anguish be exprest,
It boots not, neither ease,
These harm myself, and those may her displease.

Ye sweet and simple strains,
Which, in the first fond pains
Of love, I us'd, my only weapons then,
Say, yet what fair shall mould
My stony heart again,
That I, at least, may soothe me as of old?

Within me seems to stir
Some pow'r which Laura's face
Busily pictures, answering still of her;
But when again to trace
Her charms I try, my verse falls weak and cold:
—Thus, thus am I denied
The sole sweet hope on which my grief relied.

As some weak babe, who strives
His lisping tongue to free,
Who cannot speak, yet will not silent be,
So me too passion drives
To sing, that ere I die,
To my sweet foe my fondness may be known:
If still, her every joy
In her fair face alone,
She choose my humble homage to disdain,
Do thou, O verdant shore!
Hear me, and waft my sighs the wide world o'er,
That all may knowledge gain
How thou at least wert friendly to my pain.

Well know'st thou, foot so fair
Never on earth was plac'd
As hers, so lately which thy margin grac'd:
Hence my heart worn with care,
And failing frame agree
My soul's most secret thoughts with thee to share:
For here I yet may see
Where, on thy carpet green,
Or 'mid thy many flow'rs her step has been.
Thus, to the bitter life
I lead in grief, some short truce I may win:
Tho' nought can end the strife
Which vexes my weak wavering soul within.

Where'er I turn my sight:
I feel a sweet serene,

The while I think *Here shone that lovely light* ;
 If flow'r or leaf I glean,
 Methinks it may have sprung
 Where she was wont her graceful way to take,
 'Neath shadowing elms, along
 The glassy stream, and make
 By the green vale her fresh and fragrant seat;
 While thus within me wake
 Fancies so fair, truth were itself less sweet:
 Blest spirit! what art thou
 Who others with such bliss canst thus endow?

Cease, cease my Song! nor hope thy simple strain
 May win the world's renown:
 With me in these calm solitudes remain,
 Nor court the crowded town,
 Where she, the all-beautiful, thy theme who makes,
 The love and wonder of the mighty wakes.

CANZONE XIV.

To the fountain of Vaucluse.

YE waters, sweet, cool, clear,
 Where she, sole Lady mine,
 Her beauteous limbs so often would recline:
 Green boughs, which gladly made
 (Sad memories yet dear)
 At once for her fair form support and shade;
 Mosses and flow'rs which lov'd to rest
 'Neath the light flowing vest
 Which her angelic bosom bound:
 Serene and sacred air,
 Where Love from her bright eyes first dealt my wound,
 Attend, and hear me now, and bear
 Calmly the last sad words of my despair.

If such my fate at last,
If Heav'n the doom have past,
That love ere long shall close these weeping eyes,
My latest hour the thought would cheer,
That my poor dust might slumber here,
When to its native home my free soul flies:
Death will less cruel be
If to the dark and doubtful grave
I bear this hope with me:
My weary spirit would not crave
A softer bed for its eternal rest,
Nor could my frame with toil oppress,
To shades more calm or spot more lovely flee.

A time may come perchance,
When to her old retreat,
Shall turn my tyrant, beautiful and sweet,
And where her lustrous glance
Beheld me on that happy day,
Yet shall her kind eyes bend their asking ray.
And, when, amid the stones,
She sees where moulder my poor bones,
Love may some softness wake:
Then will she mourn my fate, with sighs
So sweet and pure, they shall my pardon make,
And force my passage to the skies,
As with her veil she checks her gushing eyes.

From the full boughs on high,
Still dear to memory,
Oft on her lap the blossoms fell in show'rs,
As she the while reclin'd,
Meek in her glory, to her beauty blind,
Half-cover'd with a wanton cloud of flow'rs;
Some lodg'd on her rich vest,
Or fell on her fair curls,
Which fitly then seemed drest

With finest gold and pearls;
 Some on the earth, some on the waters fell,
 Or in fond fairy whirls
 Seem'd to exclaim, *Here mighty Love does dwell.*

How often have I said,
 Fill'd with a holy dread,
Surely from Paradise this being sprung!
 Her port of majesty and grace,
 Kind speech, sweet smiles, and lovely face,
 Over me such forgetfulness have flung,
 And made to truth my mind
 Unconsciously so blind,
 That ever I sigh forth
How, and when came I here,
 Thinking myself in heav'n and not on earth:
 Each spot seems comfortless and drear
 To me, save this where first my love had birth.

As thine the wish, my Song, if thine the art
 To please like her who prompts thy lays,
 Boldly might'st thou depart
 And challenge of admiring worlds the praise!

CANZONE XV.

He finds her image everywhere.

To the one theme where Love impels me still,
 Returns my melancholy verse again:
 Fit sign and sequel, that my harass'd mind
 As first it was must still alas! remain.
 He who oft questions of my life's sharp ill
 Leaves me in doubt and to the future blind:
 But, of my martyrdom, because I find,
 Deep in my heart, self-studied and known well,

With his own hand the history written so,
And for in song my woe
Loses its load, and sighs forget to swell,
Yet will I speak, and show
How, tho' I view full many a varied scene,
One only fair I see, and her sweet mien.

Since that my envious fortune's hard decree,
In her inexorable pride, apart
Life's first and fondest good from me withdrew,
With memory alone love feeds my heart:
Whence if the earth, in youthful guise, I see
Begin her robe of green to don anew,
Methinks, as in her tender years, I view
That lovely maiden now a lady grown.
When darts the summer sun his cloudless beams,
E'en such, my fancy deems,
Love's flame, in noble heart, should still be shown:
Or next when autumn seems
To mourn his mellow'd warmth and milder rays,
I see her beauty crown'd with perfect days.

If woods with verdure, earth with violets rife,
I mark, i' th' welcome time when winter dies
And better stars a genial force obtain,
Those violets and that green before me rise,
Wherewith, in my young days of passionate strife,
Love was so arm'd that still I bear his chain.
I see their gay and graceful tints again,
Decking the lovely form which sweetly shrin'd
An angel spirit, 'neath whose delicate spell
All other pleasures fell
Rebuk'd and vile; each grace of mien and mind
My memory treasures well,
That budded then, to blossom soon more fair,
Sole cause yet comfort sole of all my care.

When virgin snow upon some mountain height,
I see far gleaming, gilded by the sun,
Love works in me—on ice as sunbeams dart—
Musing her bright and heav'nly face upon,
Which from afar can melt my constant sight,
Yet dazzles me when near, and binds my heart;
Where golden locks and moony forehead join,
With proud glad air—which mortal eyes save mine
Sure never saw!—he takes his conq'ring seat,
And thence, to passion's heat,
LAURA herself soft smiling at my sighs,
With force so strong yet sweet,
Inflames me that all time it triumphs o'er,
Nor winter makes it less, nor summer more.

If haply, after some brief storm of night,
Thro' the calm sky the truant stars shine clear,
Silvering the frost or sparkling 'mid the dew,
Before my sight those radiant orbs appear,
Whence hangs my weary life, as quick and bright,
Her veil's fine shade as first they lighten'd through:
Heav'n from their beauties on that glad day grew
Itself more fair: that still for them I burn
What marvel when they still shine thus on me!
When first the sun I see,
I feel the light, my light of love return;
Behind the hills when he
Slow sinks, my spirit he of life bereaves,
To clouds and darkness as the world he leaves.

Fresh cull'd by virgin hands, the garden's pride,
If e'er I view, in vase of finest gold,
Happily match'd, the lily and the rose,
Methinks that I in them her face behold,
With ev'ry other charm, less rare, beside,
Three excellent beauties, all her own, that shows:

The sunny hair, adown a neck that flows,
Swanlike, with which in vain would ivory vie,
And the soft cheeks kiss'd by a gentle blush:
In spring when light winds brush
The meadow's many flow'rs, on memory
The scene and moment rush,
When first I saw, and sank at once their slave,
I' th' wanton air those golden tresses wave.

To number, one by one, the stars of Heaven,
To bind the sea within a scanty vase,
Haply I hop'd, when, in these few weak lines,
The new desire within me rose to trace
How beauty's flow'r in her, to others given
In scatter'd tints, with perfect lustre shines,
So that for me it ne'er in her declines:
But vain the task, equally vain were flight,
Since heav'n and earth alike are closed to me,
For, to my fainting sight
Ever more present, she consumes me quite:
Life of my life, save she
No fair, if seen, is welcome to my eyes,
Nor sound another name than hers my sighs.

But cease my Song! whate'er I speak, is nought
To the dear secret thought,
Which, day and night, I bear within my mind,
Thro' whose sole comfort kind
As yet I perish not in this sharp strife:
Else long had ceas'd my life,
Alone and far, in absence doom'd to grieve,
Which now from death finds respite and reprieve.

CANZONE XVI.

To Italy and her princes, exciting them to free her once more from her long and
hard slavery.

MINE Italy! tho' words all idle be
The mortal wounds to close,
Which on thy lovely form so oft I see,
At least it soothes me that my sighs are those
From Arno, Tiber, Po,
Where mournful now I dwell, alike which flow.
Great God! I thee implore,
By the fond love which led thee erst below,
To visit this thy favour'd land once more:
O gracious Lord! behold
From what light causes spring these cruel wars:
The hearts, which savage Mars
Now harden'd keeps and cold,
Do thou, in thy great pow'r, so melt and mould,
That they thy truth may feel,
Unworthy as I am, which here my lips reveal.

Ye, to whose guiding hands the reins by Heaven
Of these fair lands are given,
Can all our wrongs no pity from you gain?
These crowds of armed strangers whence, and why?
Is it that each green plain
Their savage gore, and not our own, may dye?
With a vain error blind,
Dimly you see, yet deem that you see well,
Who love, or faith, expect in venal mind;
Tho' such in myriads swell
Around, we are but girt with hostile brands.
Hark! the fierce deluge pours
From distant desert strands
To inundate our lov'd and lovely shores;
Who shall our cause defend,
When thus from our own hands the deadliest blows descend?

Well did kind Nature for our land provide,
When she the barrier gave
Of the tall Alps from German hate to save;
But blind and working his own ruin still,
His arts ambition plied,
Till the sound body felt the eating ill.
And now in the same fold,
Wild wolves and harmless herds so mingled throng,
That still the weaker groan beneath the strong:
And they, ah! be it told
With shame, of those wild lawless tribes the seed,
Whom, as our annals write,
Marius so quell'd in fight
(Still lives the memory of the glorious deed)
That, bending to the flood,
His tir'd and thirsty bands not water drank, but blood.

I name not Cæsar, over ruin'd plains,
Whose good sword from *their* veins
In crimson signs his savage conquests trac'd;
But now, nor know I by what evil stars,
Heav'n marks us with its hate;
Thanks be to you in whom the pow'r was plac'd,
Whose causeless ceaseless jars
Have the first fairest land on earth defac'd.
What crime, what judgment leads you, or what fate
To trample on distress?
Why all your hate upon the wretched wreak,
The fallen why oppress,
And the false stranger seek
Who sheds his blood and sells his soul for gold?
In truth's great cause I speak,
Neither by angry hate, nor secret scorn controll'd!

Mark ye not yet, by thousand proofs made clear,
Bavaria's hate and guile,
Who jests with Death yet keeps him ever near?

Worse seems disgrace than any loss to me!
But you, your blood the while
More freely shed the more you feel their hate.
Think, think on your fall'n state,
And inly ye shall own how little he
Can hold us dear who holds himself so vile:
Wake, Latin blood awake!
Shake off these damning stains from thy fair fame!
Nor of a pow'rless name
An empty idol make!
If sink, by savage strength and insult rude,
The nobler mind subdued,
It is not Nature's work, ours, ours the sin and shame!

Ah! is not this mine own old land where first
I trode? and this the nest
My careless boyhood which so gently nurst?
My kind good mother, country of my trust,
In whose beloved breast
All peaceful sleeps my parents' mould'ring dust?
Let, let this thought subdue!
To pity stirr'd, the fallen nation view
Too long in tears, by tyranny oppress,
Who, after God, in you
Alone can hope: and if one sign speak grief,
E'en now if mercy warms,
Valour shall take up arms
Against brute force: and be the combat brief;
The bravery of our sires
Each true Italian heart still warms with its old fires!

Mark, mighty Lords, how swift of Time the race!
How as life flies away,
Death presses on its rear with giant pace!
Now are you here, think, think on the last day:
The doubtful pass to free
Who hopes, of soul must pure and single be;

To gain the narrow gate
 Who seeks, must leave behind him scorn and hate,
 Blasts ever adverse to a life serene;
 Whose time till now has been
 To others' harm, let him with mind, hand, heart,
 In some more worthy cause
 Espouse the honest part,
 And in this nobler study win applause.
 Thus peace is gain'd and joy,
 And the path open lies which leads to bliss on high.

My Song! I counsel thee
 Let courtcous fashions grace thy reasoning free,
 For thou amid the proud and high must go,
 Whose haughty nature still,
 Too much the slave of customs old and ill,
 Is truth's worst foe.
 Better thy fate shall prove
 'Mid the few lofty spirits who virtue love;
 Should these too pine, *When may we hope release?*
 Answer them with my words, *In Peace, Peace, only Peace!*

CANZONE XVII

 Distance and solitude.

FROM thought to thought still on, from mount to mount
 Me Love conducts: the broad and beaten ground
 Proves contrary to peaceful pensive days:
 By rip'ling brook, lone plain, or mossy fount,
 Or where green hills some quiet vale surround,
 Almost my harass'd soul its strife allays:
 And, just as love decrees,
 Now smiles, now weeps, now fears, now feels at ease:
 And, answering ev'ry inward change, my mien

Now low'ring, now serene,
But for awhile e'en with itself agrees;
Hence all, who ever lov'd, pity my fate,
And cry, *He burns, and knows not his sad state.*

By lofty mountain and wild wood I find
Some rest alone: each habitable place
Is to my coward eyes a mortal foe:
Springs at each step some new thought to my mind
Of my fair mistress, as with playful grace
She mocks the torments which for her I know:
Yet when, to change this life,
So bitter-sweet, I would renew my strife,
Hope softly whispers, *Love, perchance, to me
May yet prove kind: and, though
Vile to myself, belov'd I yet may be
To her;* and then at the fond thought I sigh,
Ah! that it could be so, but how, when, why?

Where some tall pine or hill its shadow rears,
Frequent I pause, and, dreamingly, design
On the first stone her fair face in my mind:
When from the trance I wake, suffus'd with tears
My breast I find, and say, *What woe is thine!
Where dost thou wander, leaving whom behind?*
But e'en while thus to bind
To their first theme my wayward thoughts I try,
Forgetful of myself, on her to muse,
So closely Love pursues
That in its own deceit my soul has joy:
Where'er I turn, so fair she seems, so pure,
I'd ask no more could but the dream endure!

Often have I—O deem it not untrue!
On the green sward, or waters clear beheld

Her living, or in some fair cloud, or tree,
Likened so well that Leda could she view
Would own her Helen's boasted charms excell'd,
Like pale stars that, at dawn, the sunbeam flee.
Yet fairer to my thought
The vision smiles, as wilder grows the spot
Thro' which I wander, and the scene more lone,
And when, at last, unkind
Truth chases the dear error from my mind,
Cold as itself, upon th' unconscious stone,
I sit me down to think, and weep alone.

Frequent impell'd by a desire intense,
Singly, I climb the highest barest crest
Where its proud shade no neighb'ring mountain throws;
And there mine eyes to mourn my woes commence,
And with the stream which from each sad fount flows,
Flows from my heart the dark cloud which opprest:
Yet far as strains my eye,
Still farther distance hides that face so fair,
Which always is to me, though absent, nigh:
But Hope thus checks my sigh,
Why blindly still repine? perchance e'en there
She mourns the fate which severs her from thee;
And with the thought my spirit breathes more free.

Again, my Song? behind yon Alpine screen,
Where spreads the sky more smiling and serene,
Me thou shalt surely find,
Some clear stream murmuring at my feet;
While the soft summer wind
Wafts from the laurel odours fresh and sweet:
There is my heart with her who o'er it reigns,
My soulless image here alone remains.

SONNET C.

Though far from Laura, solitary and unhappy, Envy still pursues him.

SINCE mercy's door is clos'd, alas! to me,
 And hopeless paths my poor life separate
 From her in whom, I know not by what fate,
 The guerdon lay of all my constancy,
 My heart that lacks not other food, on sighs
 I feed: to sorrow born, I live on tears:
 Nor therefore mourn I: sweeter far appears
 My present grief than others can surmise.
 On thy dear portrait rests alone my view,
 Which nor Praxiteles nor Xeuxis drew,
 But a more bold and cunning pencil fram'd.
 What shore can hide me, or what distance shield
 If by my cruel exile yet untam'd
 Insatiate Envy finds me here conceal'd?

SONNET CL

He replies to a sonnet of Jacopo Lentino.

WAYS apt and new to sing of love I'd find
 Forcing from her hard heart full many a sigh,
 And re-enkindle in her frozen mind
 Desires a thousand, passionate and high,
 O'er her fair face would see each swift change pass,
 See her fond eyes at length where pity reigns,
 As one who sorrows when too late, alas!
 For his own error and another's pains,
 See the fresh roses edging that fair snow
 Move with her breath, that ivory descried
 Which turns to marble him who sees it near,
 See all, for which in this brief life below
 Myself I weary not but rather pride
 That Heav'n for later times has kept me here.

SONNET CII.

The contradictions of love.

IF 'tis not Love, what is't my heart which shakes?
 Yet if it be, ye Gods! what is this love?
 If good, whence the fierce tumult it awakes?
 If bad, O whence the sweet pains which I prove?
 If for my welfare, why thus muse and sigh?
 If for my wrong, what boots it to bewail?
 O living death! delightful ill! if I
 Consent not, o'er me how canst thou prevail?
 If I consent in mine own spite I mourn;
 Guideless, unshelter'd from the hostile wind
 My frail bark tosses on a boundless main;
 So small the wisdom of mine erring mind
 I know not what I like or loathe: I burn
 With summer's heat in winter's icy reign.

SONNET CIII.

Four similes.

ME Love has plac'd as mark before the dart,
 As to the sun the snow, as wax to fire,
 As clouds to wind: Lady, e'en now I tire
 Craving the mercy which ne'er warms thy heart.
 From those bright eyes was aim'd the mortal blow,
 'Gainst which nor time nor place avail'd me aught;
 From thee alone—nor let it strange be thought—
 The sun, the fire, the wind whence I am so.
 The darts are thoughts of thee, thy face the sun,
 The fire my passion; such the weapons be
 With which at will Love dazzles yet destroys.
 Thy fragrant breath and angel voice—which won
 My heart that from its thrall shall ne'er be free—
 The wind which vapour-like my frail life flies.

SONNET CIV.

Contrarieties.

I FIND not peace yet dare not to make war;
 I fear and hope, I freeze yet am on fire,
 On earth I creep, yet mount the skies afar,
 The wide world I embrace but nought acquire;
 She, who my tost heart holds in hopeless thrall,
 Nor keeps me for her own, nor slacks my chain,
 Love nor all spares me, nor destroys me all,
 Nor seeks my death nor frees me from my pain.
 Sightless I see, and without tongue I speak,
 I feed on grief yet smile amid my tears,
 I love another and myself I hate,
 Now for my death I pray, now life I seek,
 Tho' this no joy can bring, and that no fears
 —Such, Lady, is for thee my heart's strange state.

CANZONE XVIII.

He likens himself to sundry strange things.

WHATE'ER most wild and new
 Was ever found in any foreign land,
 If view'd and valued true,
 Most likens me 'neath Love's transforming hand.
 Whence the bright day breaks thro',
 Alone and consortless, a bird there flies,
 Who voluntary dies,
 To live again regenerate and entire:
 So ever my desire,
 Alone, itself repairs, and on the crest
 Of its own lofty thoughts turns to our sun,
 There melts and is undone,
 And sinking to its first state of unrest,
 So burns and dies, yet still its strength resumes,
 And, Phoenix-like, afresh in force and beauty blooms.

Where Indian billows sweep,
A wonderous stone there is, before whose strength
Stout navies, weak to keep
Their binding iron, sink engulfed at length:
So prove I, in this deep
Of bitter grief, whom, with her own hard pride,
That fair rock knew to guide
Where now my life in wreck and ruin drives:
Thus too the soul deprives,
By theft, my heart, which once so stonelike was,
It kept my senses whole, now far dispers'd:
For mine, O fate accurst!
A rock that lifeblood and not iron draws,
Whom still i' th' flesh a magnet living, sweet,
Drags to the fatal shore a certain doom to meet.

'Neath the far Ethiop skies
A beast is found, most mild and meek of air
Which seems, yet in her eyes
Danger and dool and death she still does bear:
Much needs he to be wise
To look on hers whoever turns his mien:
Altho' her eyes unseen,
All else securely may be view'd at will:
But I to mine own ill
Run ever in rash grief, tho' well I know
My suff'rings past and future, still my mind
Its eager, deaf and blind
Desire o'ermasters and unhinges so,
That in her fine eyes and sweet sainted face,
Fatal, angelic, pure, my cause of death I trace.

In the rich South there flows
A fountain from the sun its name that wins,
This marvel still that shows,
Boiling at night, but chill when day begins;
Cold, yet more cold it grows

As the sun's mounting car we nearer see:
So happens it with me
(Who am, alas! of tears the source and seat),
When the bright light and sweet,
My only sun retires, and lone and drear
My eyes are left, in night's obscurest reign,
I burn, but if again
The gold rays of the living sun appear,
My slow blood stiffens, instantaneous, strange,
Within me and without I feel the frozen change!

Another fount of fame
Springs in Epirus, which, as bards have told,
Kindles the lurking flame,
And the live quenches, while itself is cold.
My soul, that, uncontroll'd,
And scathless from love's fire till now had past,
Carelessly left at last
Near the cold fair for whom I ceaseless sigh,
Was kindled instantly:
Like martyrdom, ne'er known by day or night,
A heart of marble had to mercy sham'd.
Which first her charms inflam'd
Her fair and frozen virtue quench'd the light;
That thus she crush'd and kindled my heart's fire,
Well know I who have felt in long and useless ire.

Beyond our earth's known brinks
In the fam'd Islands of the Blest there be
Two founts: of this who drinks
Dies smiling: who of that to live is free.
A kindred fate Heav'n links
To my sad life, who, smilingly, could die
For like o'erflowing joy,
But soon such bliss new cries of anguish stay.
Love! still who guid'st my way,
Where, dim and dark, the shade of fame invites,

Not of that fount we speak, which, full each hour,
 Ever with larger pow'r
 O'erflows, when Taurus with the Sun unites;
 So are my eyes with constant sorrow wet,
 But in that season most when I my Lady met.

Should any ask, my Song!
 Or how or where I am, to such reply:
*Where the tall mountain throws
 Its shade, in the lone vale, whence Sorga flows,
 He roams, where never eye
 Save Love's, who leaves him not a step, is by,
 And one dear image who his peace destroys,
 Alone with whom to muse all else in life he flies*

SONNET CV.

He inveighs against the scandals which the Court of Rome brought upon the times.

THE flames of Heav'n thy wanton tresses blast,
 Wicked one! for thy shame, who, sea and land
 Draining, at others' cost, art rich and grand,
 And in thine evil deeds such pleasure hast:
 Foul nest of treason! whence o'er earth are cast
 All vices that man's heart has ever plann'd
 Wine, sloth, and surfeitings at thy right hand,
 And ev'ry luxury emptied to the last.
 Lust grey and mitred, Women lost to shame
 Dance in thy halls, where Belzebub accurst
 Holds the lewd glass and fans the impure flame.
 Not thus of yore on down, in secret nurst,
 But bare on thorns and naked to the wind,—
 Now live that more than lees thy God may find.

SONNET CVI.

He predicts to Rome the arrival of some great personage who will bring her back to her old virtue.

COVETOUS Babylon of wrath divine

By its worst crimes has drain'd the full cup now,
 And for its future Gods to whom to bow
 Not Pow'r nor Wisdom ta'en, but Love and Wine.

Tho' hoping reason, I consume and pine,
 Yet shall her crown deck some new Soldan's brow,
 Who shall again build up, and we avow
 One faith in God, in Rome one head and shrine.

Her idols shall be shatter'd, in the dust
 Her proud tow'rs, enemies of Heav'n, be hurl'd,
 Her wardens into flames and exile thrust,
 Fair souls and friends of virtue shall the world
 Possess in peace: and we shall see it made
 All gold, and fully its old works display'd.

SONNET CVII.

He attributes the wickedness of the Court of Rome to its great wealth.

FOUNTAIN of sorrows, centre of mad ire,

Rank error's school and fane of heresy,
 Once Rome, now Babylon, the false and free,
 Whom fondly we lament and long desire.

O furnace of deceits, O prison dire,
 Where good roots die and the ill weed grows a tree,
 Hell upon earth, great marvel will it be
 If Christ reject thee not in endless fire.

Founded in humble poverty and chaste,
 Against thy founders lift'st thou now thy horn,
 Impudent harlot! Is thy hope then plac'd

In thine adult'ries and thy wealth ill-born?
 Since comes no Constantine his own to claim,
 The vext world must endure, or end its shame.

SONNET CVIII.

Far from his friends, he flies to them in thought, and stays there in spirit.

THE more my own fond wishes would impel
 My steps to you, sweet company of friends!
 Fortune with their free course the more contends,
 And elsewhere bids me roam, by snare and spell.
 The heart, sent forth by me tho' it rebel,
 Is still with you where that fair vale extends,
 In whose green windings most our sea ascends,
 From which but yesterday I wept farewell.
 It took the right-hand way, the left I tried,
 I dragg'd by force in slav'ry to remain,
 It left at liberty with Love its guide;
 But patience is great comfort amid pain:
 Long habits mutually form'd declare
 That our communion must be brief and rare.

SONNET CIX.

The courage and timidity of Love.

LOVE in my thought who ever lives and reigns,
 And in my heart still holds the upper place,
 At times comes forward boldly in my face,
 There plants his ensign and his post maintains:
 She, who in love instructs us and its pains,
 Would fain that reason, shame, respect should chase
 Presumptuous hope and high desire abase,
 And at our daring scarce herself restrains.
 Love thereon to my heart retires dismay'd,
 Abandons his attempt, and weeps and fears,
 And hiding there, no more my friend appears.
 What can the liege whose lord is thus afraid,
 More than with him, till life's last gasp, to dwell?
 For who well loving dies at least dies well.

SONNET CX.

He likens himself to the insect which, flying into one's eyes, meets its death.

As when at times in summer's scorching heat,
 Lur'd by the light, the simple insect flies,
 As a charm'd thing, into the passer's eyes,
 Whence death the one and pain the other meet,
 Thus ever I, my fatal sun to greet,
 Rush to those eyes where so much sweetness lies
 That reason's guiding hand fierce Love defies,
 And by strong will is better judgment beat.
 I clearly see they value me but ill,
 And, for against their torture fails my strength,
 That I am doom'd my life to lose at length :
 But Love so dazzles and deludes me still,
 My heart their pain and not my loss laments,
 And blind, to its own death, my soul consents.

SESTINA V.

He tells the true story of his love, and says that it is high time to devote himself to God.

BENEATH the pleasant shade of beauteous leaves
 I ran for shelter from a cruel light,
 E'en here below that burnt me from high heav'n,
 When the last snow had ceas'd upon the hills,
 And amorous airs renewed the sweet spring time,
 And on the upland flourish'd herbs and boughs.

Ne'er did the world behold such graceful boughs,
 Nor ever wind rustled so verdant leaves,
 As were by me beheld in that young time:
 So that, though fearful of the ardent light,

I sought not refuge from the shadowing hills,
But of the plant accepted most in heav'n.

A Laurel then protected from that heav'n:
Whence, oft, enamour'd with its lovely boughs,
A roamer I have been through woods, o'er hills,
But never found I other trunk, nor leaves
Like these, so honour'd with supernal light,
Which chang'd not qualities with changing time.

Wherefore each hour more firm, from time to time
Following where I heard my call from Heav'n,
And guided ever by a soft clear light,
I turned, devoted still, to those first boughs,
Or when on earth are scatter'd the sere leaves,
Or when the sun restor'd makes green the hills.

The woods, the rocks, the fields, the floods, and hills,
All that is made are conquer'd, chang'd by time:
And therefore ask I pardon of those leaves,
If, after many years, revolving Heav'n
Sway'd me to flee from those entangling boughs,
When I begun to see its better light.

So dear to me at first was the sweet light,
That willingly I passed o'er difficult hills,
But to be nearer those beloved boughs;
Now shortening life, the apt place, and full time
Show me another path to mount to heav'n,
And to make fruit not merely flow'rs and leaves.

Other love, other leaves, and other light,
Other ascent to heav'n by other hills
I seek—in sooth 'tis time—and other boughs.

SONNET CXI.

To a fair friend who spoke to him of Laura's charms.

WHENE'ER you speak of her in that soft tone
 Which Love himself his vot'ries surely taught,
 My ardent passion to such fire is wrought
 That e'en the dead reviving warmth might own :
 Where'er to me she, dear or kind, was known
 There the bright lady is to mind now brought,
 In the same bearing which, to waken thought,
 Needed no sound but of my sighs alone.
 Half-turn'd I see her looking, on the breeze
 Her light hair flung; so true her mem'ries roll
 On my fond heart of which she keeps the keys;
 But the surpassing bliss which floods my soul
 So checks my tongue, to tell how, queen-like, there,
 She sits as on her throne, I never dare.

SONNET CXII.

Extolling the beauties of Laura at the time when he first fell in love.

SUN never rose so beautiful and bright
 When skies above most clear and cloudless show'd,
 Nor, after rain, the bow of Heav'n ere glow'd
 With tints so varied, delicate, and light,
 As in rare beauty flash'd upon my sight,
 The day I first took up this amorous load,
 That face whose fellow ne'er on earth abode—
 Even my praise to paint it seems a slight!
 Then saw I Love, who did her fine eyes bend
 So sweetly, ev'ry other face obscure
 Has from that hour till now appear'd to me.
 The boy-god and his bow, I saw them, friend,
 From whom life since has never been secure,
 Whom still I madly yearn again to see.

SONNET CXIII.

 Invincible constancy.

PLACE me where flow'r and herb the sun destroys,
 Where snow and constant ice his empire bar;
 Place me where, mild and moderate, wheels his car,
 Where longest shines his light, or earliest dies;
 Place me where Fortune tempts, or where she tries,
 In health and peace, or 'mid disease and war,
 Where youth-joys bless, or cares of manhood mar,
 Where spread vast deserts or wild oceans rise:
 Place me in heav'n, on earth, in hell's abyss,
 In valley dark and low, on mountain high,
 Whether i' th' flesh, or freed, my spirit is,
 Known or unknown to fame—it recks not, I
 Change not my life or love, whose fate is this
 Ever to breathe the useless endless sigh.

SONNET CXIV.

 He praises the virtues and beauties of Laura, with whose name he would wish to fill the whole world.

WITH glowing virtue grac'd, of warm heart known,
 Sweet Spirit! for whom so many a page I trace,
 Tow'r in high worth which foundest well thy base!
 Centre of honour, perfect and alone!
 O blushes! on fresh snow like roses thrown,
 Wherein I read myself and mend apace;
 O pleasures! lifting me to that fair face
 Brightest of all on which the sun e'er shone.
 O, if so far its sound may reach, your name
 On my fond verse shall travel West and East,
 From southern Nile to Thule's utmost bound.
 But such full audience since I may not claim,
 It shall be heard in that fair land at least
 Which Apennine divides, which Alps and seas surround.

SONNET CXV.

Her kind looks comfort him in fear, her cold looks check his passion.

WHEN, with two ardent spurs and a hard rein,
 Passion, my daily life who rules and leads,
 From time to time the usual law exceeds
 That calm, at least in part, my spirits may gain,
 It findeth her who, on my forehead plain,
 The dread and daring of my deep heart reads,
 And seeth Love, to punish its misdeeds,
 Lighten her piercing eyes with worse disdain.
 Wherefore—as one who fears the impending blow
 Of angry Jove—it back in haste retires,
 For great fears ever master great desires;
 But the cold fire and shrinking hopes which so
 Lodge in my heart, transparent as a glass,
 O'er her sweet face at times make gleams of grace to
 pass.

SONNET CXVI.

He extols the Laurel and its favourite stream.

NOT all the streams that water the bright earth,
 Not all the trees to which its breast gives birth,
 Can cooling drop, or healing balm impart
 To slack the fire which scorches my sad heart,
 As one fair brook which ever weeps with me,
 Or, which I praise and sing, as one dear tree.
 This only help I find amid Love's strife;
 Wherefore it me behoves to live my life
 In arms, which else from me too rapid goes.
 Thus on fresh shore the lovely laurel grows;
 Who planted it, his high and graceful thought
 'Neath its sweet shade, to Sorgia's murmurs, wrote.

BALLATA VI.

Though she be less severe, he is still not contented and tranquil at heart.

FROM time to time more clemency for me
 In that sweet smile and angel form I trace;
 Seem too her lovely face
 And lustrous eyes at length more kind to be.
 Yet, if thus honour'd, wherefore do my sighs
 In doubt and sorrow flow,
 Signs that too truly show
 My anguish'd desperate life to common eyes?
 Haply if, where she is, my glance I bend,
 This harass'd heart to cheer,
 Methinks that Love I hear
 Pleading my cause, and see him succour lend.
 Not therefore at an end the strife I deem,
 Nor in sure rest my heart at last esteem;
 For Love most burns within
 When hope most pricks us on the way to win.

SONNET CXVII.

A soliloquy.

- P.* WHAT actions fire thee, and what musings fill?
 Soul! is it peace, or truce, or war eterne?
- H.* Our lot I know not, but, as I discern,
 Her bright eyes favour not our cherisht ill.
- P.* What profit, with those eyes if she at will
 Makes us in summer freeze, in winter burn?
- H.* From him, not her those orbs their movement learn.
- P.* What's he to us, she sees it and is still.
- H.* Sometimes, tho' mute the tongue, the heart laments
 Fondly, and, tho' the face be calm and bright,
 Bleeds inly, where no eye beholds its grief.
- P.* Nathless the mind not thus itself contents
 Breaking the stagnant woes which there unite,
 For misery in fine hopes finds no relief.

SONNET CXVIII.

The surpassing beauty and virtue of Laura inspire what he writes.

NE'ER from the black and tempest-troubled brine
The weary mariner fair haven sought,
As shelter I from the dark restless thought
Whereto hot wishes spur me and incline:
Nor mortal vision ever light divine
Dazzled, as mine, in their rare splendour caught
Those matchless orbs, with pride and passion fraught,
Where Love aye haunts his darts to gild and fine.
Him, blind no more but quiver'd, there I view,
Naked, except so far as shame conceals,
A winged boy—no fable—quick and true.
What few perceive he thence to me reveals;
So read I clearly in her eyes' dear light
Whate'er of love I speak, whate'er I write.

SONNET CXIX.

If she will neither welcome him, nor dismiss, he must ere long die.

FIERCER than tiger, savager than bear,
In human guise an angel form appears,
Who between fear and hope, from smiles to tears
So tortures me that doubt becomes despair.
Ere long if she nor welcomes me, nor frees,
But, as her wont, between the two retains,
By the sweet poison circling thro' my veins,
My life, O Love! will soon be on its lees.
No longer can my virtue worn and frail
With such severe vicissitudes contend,
At once which burn and freeze, make red and pale:
By flight it hopes at length its grief to end,
As one who hourly failing feels death nigh:
Pow'rless he is indeed who cannot even die!

SONNET CXX.

He implores mercy or death.

Go, burning sighs, to her cold bosom go,
Its circling ice which hinders pity rend,
And if to mortal pray'r Heav'n e'er attend,
Let death or mercy finish soon my woe.
Go forth fond thoughts, and to our Lady show
The love to which her bright looks never bend,
If still her harshness, or my star offend
We shall at least our hopeless error know.
Go, in some chosen moment, gently say,
Our state disquieted and dark has been,
Even as hers pacific and serene.
Go, safe at last, for Love escorts your way:
From my sun's face if right the skies I guess
Well may my cruel fortune now be less.

SONNET CXXI.

The eyes of Laura inspire their beholder with virtue.

THE stars, the heav'n, the elements, I ween,
Put forth their ev'ry art and utmost care
In that bright light, as fairest Nature fair,
Whose like on earth the sun has nowhere seen;
So noble, elegant, unique her mien
Scarce mortal glance to rest on it may dare,
Love so much softness and such graces rare
Show'rs from those dazzling and resistless e'en.
The atmosphere, pervaded and made pure
By their sweet rays, kindles with goodness so,
Thought cannot equal it nor language show.
Here no ill wish, no base desires endure,
But honour, virtue. Here, if ever yet
Has lust his death from supreme beauty met.

SONNET CXXII.

Laura in tears.

HIGH Jove to thunder ne'er was so intent,
So resolute great Cæsar ne'er to strike,
That pity had not quench'd the ire of both,
And from their hands th' accustom'd weapons shook.
Madonna wept: my Lord decreed that I
Should see her then, and there her sorrows hear;
So joy, desire should fill me to the brim,
Thrilling my very marrow and my bones.
Love show'd to me, nay sculptur'd on my heart
That sweet and sparkling tear, and those soft words
Wrote with a diamond on its inmost core,
Where with his constant and ingenious keys
He still returneth often, to draw thence
True tears of mine and long and heavy sighs.

SONNET CXXIII.

The effects of her grief.

I'VE seen on earth angelic beauty beam,
And heav'nly grace to mortals rarely shown,
Which, while it glads, yet grieves me to have known,
Which seems the more I view it some vain dream;
And I have seen with tears those fine eyes teem,
Whose lustre often the bright sun outshone,
Have heard sighs gently heav'd at whose sweet tone
Mov'd the firm mountain, stood the rushing stream.
Love, sorrow, firmness, feeling, prudence join'd
A sweeter concert made lamenting there
Than ever yet was heard by mortal ear:
And Heav'n unto the music so inclin'd,
That not a leaf stirr'd in the wanton air,
Such wond'rous sweetness fill'd the mute admiring
sphere.

SONNET CXXIV.

He recalls her as he saw her when in tears.

THAT ever painful, ever honour'd day
 So left her living image upon my heart
 Beyond or lover's wit or poet's art
 That oft to it will doating memory stray.
 A gentle pity softening her bright mien,
 Her sorrow there so sweet and sad was heard,
 Doubt in the gazer's bosom almost stirr'd
 Goddess or mortal, which made heav'n serene.
 Fine gold her hair, her face as sunlit snow,
 Her brows and lashes jet, twin stars her eyne,
 Whence the young archer oft took fatal aim;
 Each loving lip—whence utt'rance sweet and low
 Her pent grief found—a rose which rare pearls line,
 Her tears of crystal and her sighs of flame.

SONNET CXXV.

Her sweet tears are ever before his eyes and heart.

WHERE'ER I rest or turn my weary eyes,
 To ease the longings which allure them still,
 Love pictures my bright lady at his will
 That ever my desire may verdant rise.
 Deep pity she with graceful grief applies—
 Warm feelings ever gentle bosoms fill—
 While captiv'd equally my fond ears thrill
 With her sweet accents and seraphic sighs.
 Love and fair Truth were both allied to tell
 The charms I saw were in the world alone,
 That 'neath the stars their like was never known.
 Nor ever words so dear and tender fell
 On list'ning ear: nor tears so pure and bright
 From such fine eyes e'er sparkled in the light.

SONNET CXXVI.

He extols the beauties and virtues of Laura.

IN what glad hour, what brighter realm above
Was found the beauteous mould, whence Nature wrought
A face, a form so fair, as if she sought
The pow'r she held in heav'n on earth to prove?
What Nymph, or Goddess in her grove, like thee
E'er gave such light locks to the summer wind?
When in one heart was so much virtue shrin'd?
—This let me own, tho' it my murd'rer be.
For heav'nly beauty man in vain shall try
O'er the wide earth to find who has not seen
The bland persuasion of that lustrous eye.
How Love at will can kill or cure I ween
He little knows who knows not Laura's sigh,
Her winning words and sweetly smiling mien.

SONNET CXXVII.

Does she speak, or smile, or look, or sit, or walk, she is in all superhuman.

As one who sees a thing incredible,
In mutual marvel Love and I combine,
Confessing, when she speaks or smiles divine,
None but herself can be her parallel.
Where the fine arches of that fair brow swell
So sparkle forth those twin true stars of mine,
Than whom no safer brighter beacons shine
His course to guide who'd wisely love and well.
What miracle is this, when, as a flow'r,
She sits on the rich grass, or to her breast,
Snow-white and soft, some fresh green shrub is prest:
And oh! how sweet, in some fair April hour,
To see her pass, alone, in pure thought there,
Weaving fresh garlands in her own bright hair.

SONNET CXXVIII.

The greater the beauty which enamours him, the worse the torments which he sustains for her.

O SCATTER'D steps! O vague and busy thoughts!
 O firmset memory! O fierce desire!
 O passion powerful! O failing heart!
 O eyes of mine, not eyes, but fountains now!
 O leaf, which honourest illustrious brows,
 Sole sign of double valour, and best crown!
 O painful life, O error oft and sweet!
 That make me search the lone plains and hard hills,
 O beauteous face! where Love together plac'd
 The spurs and curb, to strive with which is vain,
 They prick and turn me so at his sole will.
 O gentle amorous souls, if such there be!
 And you, O naked spirits of mere dust,
 Tarry and see how great my suff'ring is!

SONNET CXXIX.

'He envies every object and place that sees, touches and hears her.

YE bright glad flow'rs and fortunate grasses where
 Oft roams my Lady in her pensive mood!
 Plains, blest to hear her gentle words and good,
 And traces, haply, of her light foot bear!
 Ye green and tender leaves! shrubs fresh and fair!
 Pale loving violets profusely strew'd!
 And thou embow'ring and beloved wood
 Beneath bland suns that proudly soar'st in air!
 O country most delicious! O pure stream
 That bathest her sweet face and eyes so clear,
 Their living lustre makes thy crystal gleam!
 I envy you her each act chaste and dear;
 Henceforth no rock be yours, but what, to burn
 With flame like mine, before her sight must learn.

SONNET CXXX.

He complains that Love leads him into difficulty.

O LOVE! by whom is seen each thought of mine,
 And the rude paths thro' which thou lead'st me known,
 Into my deepest heart thine eyes incline,
 Hid from the world, reveal'd to thee alone.
 Thou know'st what I have borne in following thee,
 Yet still from mount to mount, day after day,
 Untir'd thou journeyest on, and wilt not see
 That I am weak and narrow is the way.
 Distinct but distant the sweet light I view
 To which thou spurr'st me on o'er ground so rough,
 But, there to fly, I have not wings like you.
 Leave me in my desires content enough,
 Which growing fiercer will myself chastise,
 Nor let me her displeasure but by my sighs.

SONNET CXXXI.

All at night have peace except himself.

O'ER earth and sky her lone watch silence keeps,
 And bird and beast in stirless slumber lie,
 Her starry chariot night conducts on high,
 And in its bed the waveless ocean sleeps.
 I wake, muse, burn, and weep; of all my pain
 The one sweet cause appears before me still;
 War is my lot which grief and anger fill,
 And thinking but of her some rest I gain.
 Thus from one bright and living fountain flows
 The bitter and the sweet on which I feed;
 One hand alone can harm me or can heal:
 And thus my martyrdom no limit knows,
 A thousand deaths and lives each day I feel,
 So distant are the paths to peace which lead!

SONNET CXXXII.

Her walk, looks, words and air.

As o'er the fresh grass her fair form its sweet
 And graceful passage makes at evening hours,
 Seems as around the newly wak'ning flow'rs
 Found virtue issue from her delicate feet.
 Love, which in true hearts only has his seat,
 Nor elsewhere deigns to prove his certain pow'rs,
 So warm a pleasure from her bright eyes show'rs,
 No other bliss I ask, no better meat.
 And with her soft look and light step agree
 Her mild and modest never eager air,
 And sweetest words in constant union rare.
 From these four sparks—nor only these we see—
 Springs the great fire wherein I live and burn,
 Which makes me from the sun as night-birds turn.

SONNET CXXXIII.

Had he not been distracted by Love, he might ere now have had the fame of a
 great Latin poet.

STILL had I sojourn'd in that Delphic cave
 Where young Apollo prophet first became,
 Verona, Mantua were not sole in fame,
 But Florence too her poet now should have:
 But since the waters of that spring no more
 Enrich my land, needs must that I pursue
 Some other planet, and, with sickle new,
 Reap from my field of sticks and thorns its store.
 Dried is the olive: elsewhere turn'd the stream
 Whose source from fam'd Parnassus was deriv'd,
 Whereby of yore it throve in best esteem.
 Me fortune thus, or fault perchance, depriv'd
 Of all good fruit—unless eternal Jove
 Show'r on my head some favour from above.

SONNET CXXXIV.

Laura sings.

HER bright and love-lit eyes on earth she bends—
 Concentres her rich breath in one full sigh—
 A brief pause—a fond hush—her voice on high
 Clear, soft, angelical, divine ascends.
 Such rapine sweet thro' all my heart extends,
 New thoughts and wishes so within me vie,
 Perforce I say, *thus be it mine to die,*
If Heav'n to me so fair a doom intends.
 But ah! those sounds whose sweetness laps my sense,
 The strong desire of more that in me yearns
 Restrain my spirit in its parting hence.
 Thus at her will I live, thus winds and turns
 The yarn of life which to my lot is given
 Earth's single Siren, sent to us from Heaven.

SONNET CXXXV.

Life will fail him before hope.

LOVE to my mind recalling that sweet thought,
 The ancient confidant our lives between,
 Well comforts me, and says I ne'er have been
 So near as now to what I hop'd and sought.
 I who, at times with dang'rous falsehood fraught,
 At times with partial truth, his words have seen
 Live in suspense, still missing the just mean,
 'Twixt yea and nay a constant battle fought.
 Meanwhile the years pass on: and I behold
 In my true glass the adverse time draw near
 Her promise and my hope which limits here.
 So let it be: alone I grow not old;
 Changes not e'en with age my loving troth;
 My fear is this, the short life left us both.

SONNET CXXXVI.

The very excess of passion ties his tongue.

FULL of a vague desire, which passes by
 All other thoughts and makes me live alone,
 E'en to myself at times a stranger grown,
 I still seek her whom most I ought to fly.
 So sweet and yet so cold she meets mine eye,
 My very spirit trembles on its throne;
 To bar my flight Love's fair foe and my own
 Strengthens her pow'r with many an armed sigh.
 Yet, if I err not much, a pitying ray
 Her brow, long clouded and severe, now shows,
 That makes awhile my sad heart calm and well:
 Then summon I my thoughts: and would essay
 My life's mistaken counsels to disclose;
 But dare not speak, so much have I to tell.

SONNET CXXXVII.

The same subject.

OFTEN already has that fair kind smile
 Embolden'd me my sorrow to repress,
 And my fair foe in meek and humble style
 With apt discourse and honest to address:
 That purpose soon her eyes make vain and vile,
 For Love my fate and fortune, more and less,
 My good, mine ill, my life and death the while,
 Has trusted in her hands to ban or bless.
 Thus language have I ever fail'd to find
 Which others than myself alone may reach
 Whom Love has left so trembling and so faint;
 And well I witness how affection blind
 Unmans the spirit as it checks the speech,
 Little he burns who can his passion paint.

SONNET CXXXVIII.

He cannot end her cruelty, nor she his hope.

ME Love has left in fair cold arms to lie,
 Which kill me wrongfully: if I complain,
 My martyrdom is doubled, worse my pain:
 Better in silence love, and loving die!
 For she the frozen Rhine with burning eye
 Can melt at will, the hard rock break in twain;
 So equal to her beauty her disdain
 That others' pleasure wakes her angry sigh.
 A breathing moving marble all the rest,
 Of very adamant is made her heart
 So hard, to move it baffles all my art.
 Despite her low'ring brow and haughty breast,
 One thing she cannot, my fond heart deter,
 From tender hopes and passionate sighs for her.

SONNET CXXXIX.

Envy may disturb, but cannot destroy his hope.

O DEADLY Envy! virtue's constant foe,
 With good and lovely eager to contest,
 Stealthily, by what way, in that fair breast
 Hast entrance found, by what arts chang'd it so?
 Thence by the roots my weal hast thou upturn,
 Too blest in love hast shown me to that fair
 Who welcom'd once my chaste and humble pray'r,
 But seems to treat me now with hate and scorn.
 But tho' you may by acts severe and ill
 Sigh at my good and smile at my distress,
 You cannot change for me a single thought.
 Not tho' a thousand times each day she kill
 Can I or hope in her or love her less,
 For tho' she scare, Love confidence has taught.

SONNET CXL.

The sweets and bitters of Love.

MARKING of those bright eyes the sun serene
Where reigneth Love who mine obscures and grieves,
My hopeless heart the weary spirit leaves
Once more to gain its paradise terrene ;
Then finding full of bitter-sweet the scene,
And in the world how vast the web it weaves,
A secret sigh for baffled love it heaves,
Whose spurs so sharp, whose curb so hard have been.
By these two contrary and mixt extremes,
With frozen or with fiery wishes fraught,
To stand 'tween misery and bliss she seems :
Seldom in glad and oft in gloomy thought,
But mostly contrite for its bold emprise,
For of like seed like fruit must ever rise!

SONNET CXLI.

Better to be unhappy for her than happy with any other fair.

AN evil star usher'd my natal morn
(If Heav'n have o'er us pow'r as some have said),
Hard was the cradle where I lay when born,
And hard the earth where first my young feet play'd,
Cruel the Lady who with eyes of scorn
And fatal bow, whose mark I still was made,
Dealt me the wound, O Love, which since I mourn,
Whose cure thou only, with those arms, canst aid.
But ah! to thee my torments pleasure bring :
She too severer would have wish'd the blow,
A spear-head thrust and not an arrow-sting.
One comfort rests—better to suffer so
For her, than others to enjoy : and I,
Sworn on thy golden dart, on this for death rely.

SONNET CXLII.

He grows young again in the dear recollections of the time and place of his first love.

THE time and scene where I a slave became
When I remember, and the knot so dear
Which Love's own hand so firmly fasten'd here,
Which made my bitter sweet, my grief a game;
My heart, with fuel stor'd, is, as a flame
Of those soft sighs familiar to mine ear,
So lit within, its very suff'rings cheer,
On these I live, and other aid disclaim.
That sun, alone which beameth for my sight,
With his strong rays my ruin'd bosom burns
Now in the eve of life as in its prime,
And from afar so gives me warmth and light,
Fresh and entire, at every hour, returns
On memory the knot, the scene, the time.

SONNET CXLIII.

His thoughts ever fixed on her, he passes fearless and safe through the forest of
Ardenne.

AMID the wild wood's lone and difficult ways,
Where travel at great risk e'en men in arms,
I pass secure—for only me alarms
That sun, which darts of living love the rays—
Singing fond thoughts in simple lays to her
Whom time and space so little hide from me,
E'en here her form, nor hers alone, I see
But maids and matrons in each beech and fir:
Methinks I hear her when the bird's soft moan,
The sighing leaves I hear, or thro' the dell
Where its bright lapse some murmuring rill pursues:
Rarely of shadowing wood the silence lone,
The solitary horror pleas'd so well,
Except that of my sun too much I lose.

SONNET CXLIV.

Returning from the above journey.

LOVE who his votary wings in heart and feet,
 To the third heav'n that lightly he may soar,
 In one short day has many a stream and shore
 Given to me, in fam'd Ardennes, to meet.
 Unarm'd and single to have pass'd is sweet
 Where war in earnest strikes, nor tells before—
 A helmless sail-less ship 'mid ocean's roar—
 My breast with dark and fearful thoughts replete;
 But reach'd my dang'rous journey's far extreme,
 Rememb'ring whence I came, and with whose wings,
 From too great courage conscious terror springs.
 But this fair country and beloved stream
 With smiling welcome reassures my heart,
 Where dwells its sole light ready to depart.

SONNET CXLV.

Tormented by love, he would subject it to reason, but fails.

LOVE in one instant spurs me and restrains,
 Assures and frightens, freezes me and burns,
 Smiles now and scowls, now summons me and spurns,
 In hope now holds me, plunges now in pains:
 Now high, now low my weary heart he hurls,
 Until fond passion loses quite the path,
 And highest pleasure seems to stir but wrath—
 My harass'd mind on such strange errors feeds!
 A friendly thought there points the proper track,
 Not of such grief as from the full eye breaks,
 To go where soon it hopes to be at ease,
 But, as if greater pow'r thence turn'd it back,
 Despite itself, another way it takes,
 And to its own slow death and mine agrees.

SONNET CXLVI.

He pacifies her by humility, and exhorts a friend to do likewise with his mistress.

WHEN my sweet foe, so haughty oft and high,
Mov'd by brief ire no more my sight can thole,
One comfort is vouchsaf'd me lest I die,
Thro' whose sole strength survives my harass'd soul;
Where'er her eyes—all light which would deny
To my sad life—in scorn or anger roll,
Mine with such true humility reply,
Soon their meek glances all her rage control.
Were it not so, methinks, I less could brook
To gaze on hers than on Medusa's mien
Which turn'd to marble all who met her look.
My friend, act thus with thine, for clos'd I ween
All other aid, and nothing flight avails
Against the wings on which our master sails.

SONNET CXLVII.

To the river Po.

Po! on thy powerful and rapid course
Well may'st thou waft along this outer shell,
But the free spirit which within does dwell
Cares not for thine, nor haply other force,
But ever home, without a tack, before
The gale, to its desire auspicious, springs
Back to the golden leaf with happy wings,
Unhelpt by wind and stream, by sail or oar.
Monarch of rivers! in thy pride and might
Meeting the Sun when he brings in the morn,
Yet leaving in the west a brighter light.
My mortal frame descends on thy full horn,
The while on wings of love my soul takes flight
Back to the dear haunts of our old sojourn.

SONNET CXLVIII.

He compares himself to a bird caught in a net.

LOVE 'mid the grass beneath a laurel green—
The plant divine which long my flame has fed,
Whose shade for me less bright than sad is seen—
A cunning net of gold and pearls had spread:
Its bait the seed he sows and reaps, I ween
Bitter and sweet, which I desire yet dread:
Gentle and soft his call, as ne'er has been
Since first on Adam's eyes the day was shed:
And the bright light which disenthrones the sun
Was flashing round, and in her hand, more fair
Than snow or ivory, was the master rope.
So fell I in the snare; their slave so won
Her speech angelical and winning air,
Pleasure, and fond desire, and sanguine hope.

SONNET CXLIX.

Reply to a sonnet of Cino of Pistoia.

LOVE with hot zeal now burns the heart within,
Now holds it fetter'd with a frozen fear,
Leaving it doubtful to our judgment here
If hope or dread, if flame or frost shall win.
In June I shiver, burn December in,
Full of desires, from jealousy ne'er clear;
E'en as a Lady who her loving fee
Hides 'neath a little veil of texture thin.
Of the two ills the first is all mine own,
By day, by night to burn; how sweet that pain
Dwells not in thought, nor ever poet sings:
Not so the other, my fair flame, is shown;
She levels all: who hopes the crest to gain
Of that proud light expands in vain his wings.

SONNET CL.

He is continually in fear of doing something which may displease her.

If thus the dear glance of my Lady slay,
 On her sweet sprightly speech if dangers wait,
 If o'er me Love usurp a pow'r so great,
 Oft as she speaks, or when her sun-smiles play :
 Alas! what were it if she put away,
 Or for my fault, or by my luckless fate,
 Her eyes from pity, and to death's full hate,
 Which now she keeps aloof, should then betray.
 Thus if at heart with terror I am cold,
 When o'er her fair face doubtful shadows spring,
 The feeling has its source in suff'rings old.
 Woman by nature is a fickle thing,
 And female hearts—time makes the proverb sure—
 Can never long one state of love endure.

SONNET CLI.

During a serious illness of Laura.

LOVE, Nature, and that gentle soul as bright,
 Where ev'ry lofty virtue dwells and reigns,
 Are sworn against my peace. As wont, Love strains
 His ev'ry pow'r that I may perish quite.
 Nature her delicate form by bonds so slight
 Holds in existence, that no help sustains;
 She is so modest that she now disdains
 Longer to brook this vile life's painful fight.
 Thus fades and fails the spirit day by day,
 Which on those dear and lovely limbs should wait,
 Our mirror of true grace which wont to give :
 And soon, if Mercy turn not Death away,
 Alas! too well I see in what sad state
 Are those vain hopes wherein I lov'd to live.

SONNET CLII.

He compares the beauties and adornments of Laura to those of the Phoenix.

THIS wond'rous Phoenix with the golden plumes
 Forms without art so rare a ring to deck
 That beautiful and soft and snowy neck,
 That ev'ry heart it melts, and mine consumes:
 Forms too a natural diadem which lights
 The air around, whence Love with silent steel
 Draws liquid subtle fire, which still I feel
 Fierce burning me tho' sharpest winter bites;
 Border'd with azure, a rich purple vest,
 Sprinkled with roses, veils her shoulders fair:
 Rare garment hers, as grace unique, alone!
 Fame, in the opulent and odorous breast
 Of Arab mountains, buries her sole lair,
 Who in our heav'n so high a pitch has flown.

SONNET CLIII.

The most famous poets of antiquity would have sung her only, had they seen her.

HAD tuneful Maro seen, and Homer old
 The living sun which here mine eyes behold,
 The best pow'rs they had join'd of either lyre,
 Sweetness and strength, that fame she might acquire;
 Unsung had been, with vext Æneas, then
 Achilles and Ulysses, godlike men,
 And for nigh sixty years who rul'd so well
 The world; and who before Ægysthus fell;
 Nay that old flow'r of virtues and of arms,
 As this new flow'r of chastity and charms,
 A rival star, had scarce such radiance flung.
 In rugged verse him honour'd Ennius sung,
 I her in mine. Grant Heav'n! on my poor lays
 She frown not, nor disdain my humble praise.

SONNET CLIV.

He fears that his verse is unsuited to celebrate worthily the virtues of Laura.

WHEN Alexander at the famous tomb
 Of fierce Achilles stood, the ambitious sigh
 Burst from his bosom—*Fortunate! on whom*
Th' Eternal bard show'r'd honours bright and high.
 But ah! for so to each is fix'd his doom,
 This pure fair dove, whose like by mortal eye
 Was never seen, what poor and scanty room
 For her great praise can my weak verse supply?
 Whom, worthiest Homer's line and Orpheus' song,
 Or his whom rev'rent Mantua still admires—
 Sole and sufficient she to wake such lyres!
 An adverse star, a fate here only wrong,
 Entrusts to one who worships her dear name,
 Yet haply injures by his praise her fame.

SONNET CLV.

To the sun, whose setting hid from him the view of Laura's home.

O BLESSED Sun! that sole sweet leaf I love,
 First lov'd by thee, in its fair seat, alone,
 Bloometh without a peer, since from above
 To Adam first our shining ill was shown.
 Pause we to look on her! Altho' to stay
 Thy course I pray thee, yet thy beams retire;
 Their shades the mountains fling, and parting day
 Parts me from all I most on earth desire.
 The shadows from yon gentle heights that fall,
 Where sparkles my sweet fire, where brightly grew
 That stately laurel from a sucker small,
 Increasing, as I speak, hide from my view
 The beauteous landscape and the blessed scene,
 Where dwells my true heart with its only queen.

SONNET CLVI.

Under the figure of a tempest-tost vessel he describes his own sad state.

MY lethe-freighted bark with reckless prone
 Cleaves the rough sea 'neath wintry midnight skies,
 My old foe at the helm our compass eyes,
 With Scylla and Charybdis on each shore,
 A prompt and daring thought at ev'ry oar,
 Which equally the storm and death defies,
 While a perpetual humid wind, of sighs,
 Of hopes and of desires, its light sail tore.
 Bathe and relax its worn and weary shrouds
 (Which ignorance with error intertwines),
 Torrents of tears, of scorn and anger clouds;
 Hidden the twin dear lights which were my signs;
 Reason and Art amid the waves lie dead,
 And hope of gaining port is almost fled.

SONNET CLVII.

The vision of the fawn.

BENEATH a laurel, two fair streams between,
 At early sunrise of the opening year,
 A milk-white fawn upon the meadow green,
 Of gold its either horn, I saw appear:
 So mild yet so majestic was its mien,
 I left, to follow, all my labours here,
 As miners after treasure, in the keen
 Desire of new, forget the old to fear.
Let none impede—so, round its fair neck, run
 The words in diamond and topaz writ—
My lord to give me liberty sees fit.
 And now the sun his noontide height had won
 When I, with weary tho' unsated view,
 Fell in the stream—and so my vision flew.

SONNET OLVIII.

All his happiness is in gazing upon her.

As life eternal is with God to be,
 No void left craving, there of all possess,
 So, Lady mine, to be with you makes blest,
 This brief frail span of mortal life to me.
 So fair as now ne'er yet was mine to see—
 If truth from eyes to heart be well exprest—
 Lovely and blessed spirit of my breast,
 Which levels all high hopes and wishes free.
 Nor would I more demand if less of haste
 She show'd to part: for if, as legends tell
 And credence find, are some who live by smell,
 On water some, or fire who touch and taste,
 All, things which neither strength nor sweetness give,
 Why should not I upon your dear sight live?

SONNET CLIX.

He invites Love to admire her.

PAUSE, Love! awhile our glory to survey,
 Charms supernatural, sublime and new,
 See, see what sweetness round her breathes, and view
 The splendour which the Gods to man display!
 Pearls, purple, gold, in matchless art, array
 Her favour'd form whose like earth never knew,
 How sweet her eyes, how soft her steps pursue
 Beneath the shadowing hills their stately way!
 Each small green herb, each flow'r that summer strows
 With lavish bounty 'neath yon old oak's shade,
 Presents to her light foot its varied dies;
 And the bright heav'n with all its bright stars glows
 More calm around, rejoicing to be made
 Serene and beautiful from Laura's eyes.

SONNET CLX.

He cannot say which is the greater happiness, to see her or to hear.

I FEED my fancy on so noble food,
 I envy not great Jove his godlike meal;
 I see her—joy invades me like a flood,
 And lethe of all other bliss I feel
 I hear her—instantly that music rare
 Bids from my captive heart the fond sigh flow,
 Caught by the hand of love I know not where,
 A double pleasure in one draught I know.
 Even in Heav'n that dear voice pleaseth well
 So winning are its words, its sound so sweet,
 None can conceive, save who have heard, their spell;
 Thus, in the same small space, visibly, meet
 All charms of eye and ear wherewith our race
 Art, Genius, Nature, Heav'n have join'd to grace.

SONNET CLXI.

Approaching the neighbourhood of Laura, he feels the force of his love for her.

THE gentle air, which brightens each green hill,
 Wak'ning the flow'rs which paint this bowery glade,
 I recognise it by its soft breath still,
 My sorrow and renown which long has made:
 Again where erst my sick heart shelter sought,
 From my dear native Tuscan air I flee:
 That light may cheer my dark and troubled thought
 I seek my sun, and hope to-day to see.
 That sun so great and genial sweetness brings,
 That Love compels me to his beams again,
 Which then so dazzle me that flight is vain:
 I ask for my escape not arms but wings:
 Heav'n by this light condemns me sure to die,
 Which from afar consumes, and burns when nigh.

SONNET CLXII.

Her pity, or his own death, can alone cure him from the wounds of Love.

I ALTER day by day in hair and mien,
 Yet shun not the old dang'rous baits and dear,
 Nor sever from the laurel, lim'd and green,
 Which nor the scorching sun, nor fierce cold sear.
 Dry shall the sea, the sky be starless seen,
 Ere I shall cease to covet and to fear
 Her lovely shadow, and—which ill I screen—
 To like yet loathe the deep wound cherish'd here:
 For never hope I respite from my pain,
 From bones and nerves and flesh till I am free,
 Unless mine enemy some pity deign,
 Till things impossible accomplish'd be,
 None but herself or death the blow can heal
 Which Love from her bright eyes has left my heart to
 feel.

SONNET CLXIII.

The breath of the light wind brings back to his mind Laura, her hair flowing as
 on the day when she first bewitched him.

THE balmy airs that from yon leafy spray
 My fever'd brow with playful murmurs greet,
 Recal to my fond heart the fatal day
 When Love his first wound dealt, so deep yet sweet,
 And gave me the fair face—in scorn away
 Since turn'd, or hid by jealousy—to meet;
 The locks, which pearls and gems now oft array,
 Whose shining tints with finest gold compete,
 So sweetly on the wind were then display'd,
 Or gather'd in with such a graceful art,
 Their very thought with passion thrills my mind.
 Time since has twin'd them in more sober braid,
 And with a snare so pow'rful bound my heart,
 Death from its fetters only can unbind.

SONNET CLXIV.

The presence of Laura transforms him, and even her shadow makes him pale.

THE heav'nly airs from yon green laurel roll'd,
 Where Love to Phoebus whilom dealt his stroke,
 Where on my neck was plac'd so sweet a yoke,
 That freedom thence I hope not to behold,
 O'er me prevail, as o'er that Arab old
 Medusa, when she chang'd him to an oak;
 Nor ever can the fairy knot be broke
 Whose light outshines the sun, not merely gold;
 I mean of those bright locks the curled snare
 Which folds and fastens with so sweet a grace
 My soul, whose humbleness defends alone.
 Her mere shade freezes with a cold despair
 My heart, and tinges with pale fear my face;
 And oh! her eyes have pow'r to make me stone.

SONNET CLXV.

He cannot tell the effect which her eyes and hair have upon him.

THE soft gale to the sun which shakes and spreads
 The gold which Love's own hand has spun and wrought,
 There, with her bright eyes and those fairy threads,
 Binds my poor heart and sifts each idle thought.
 My veins of blood, my bones of marrow fail,
 Thrills all my frame when I, to hear or gaze,
 Draw near to her, who oft, in balance frail,
 My life and death together holds and weighs,
 And see those love-fires shine wherein I burn,
 And, as its snow each sweetest shoulder heaves,
 Flash the fair tresses right and left by turn;
 Verse fails to paint what fancy scarce conceives.
 From two such lights is intellect distressed,
 And by such sweetness weary and oppress.

SONNET CLXVL

He finds her glove, and, launching into praises of her fair hand, complains that he will have to restore it to her.

O BEAUTEOUS hand! which robb'st me of my heart,
 And holdest all my life in little space;
 Hand! which their utmost effort and best art
 Nature and Heav'n alike have join'd to grace;
 O sister pearls of orient hue, ye fine
 And fairy fingers! to my wounds alone
 Cruel and cold, does Love awhile incline
 In my behalf, that naked ye are shown?
 O Glove! most snowy, delicate and dear,
 Which spotless ivory and fresh roses set,
 Where can on earth a sweeter spoil be met,
 Unless her fair veil thus reward us here?
 Inconstancy of human things! the theft
 Late won and dearly priz'd too soon from me is reft!

SONNET CLXVII

Not only her hands but everything in her is of marvellous beauty.

NOT of one dear hand only I complain,
 Which hides it, to my loss, again from view,
 But its fair fellow and her soft arms too
 Are prompt my meek and passive heart to pain.
 Love spreads a thousand toils, nor one in vain,
 Amid the many charms, bright, pure and new,
 That so her high and heav'nly part endue,
 No style can equal it, no mind attain.
 That starry forehead and those tranquil eyes,
 The fair angelic mouth, where pearl and rose
 Contrast each other, whence rich music flows,
 These fill the gazer with a fond surprise,
 The fine head, the bright tresses which defied
 The sun to match them in his noonday pride.

SONNET CLXVIII.

He regrets having returned her glove, since, from rich and happy, he has thereby become poor and disconsolate.

ME Love and Fortune then supremely blest !
 Her glove which gold and silken broid'ry bore !
 I seem'd to reach of utmost bliss the crest,
 Musing within myself on her who wore.
 Ne'er on that day I think, of days the best,
 Which made me rich, then beggar'd as before,
 But rage and sorrow fill mine aching breast,
 With slighted love and self-shame boiling o'er ;
 That on my precious prize in time of need
 I kept not hold, nor made a firmer stand
 'Gainst what at best was merely angel force,
 That my feet were not wings their flight to speed,
 And so at last take vengeance on the hand,
 Make my poor eyes of tears the too oft source.

SONNET CLXIX.

He suffers much, hopes little, but cannot complain of her.

THE flames that ever on my bosom prey
 From living ice, or cold fair marble pour,
 And so exhaust my veins and waste my core,
 Almost insensibly I melt away.
 Death, his stern arm already rear'd to slay,
 As thunders angry Heav'n or lions roar,
 Pursues my life that vainly flies before,
 While I with terror shake, and mute obey.
 And yet, were Love and Pity friends, they might
 A double column for my succour throw
 Between my worn soul and the mortal blow :
 It may not be ; such feelings in the sight
 Of my lov'd foe and mistress never stir ;
 The fault is in my fortune, not in her.

SONNET CLXX.

She credits not his love, but posterity will admire it.

ALAS! I burn, yet credence fail to gain :

All others credit it save only she

All others who excels, alone for me ;

She seems to doubt it still yet sees it plain.

Infinite beauty, little faith and slow,

Perceive ye not my whole heart in mine eyes?

Well might I hope, save for my hostile skies,

From mercy's fount some pitying balm to flow.

Yet this my flame which scarcely moves your care,

And your warm praises sung in these fond rhymes,

May thousands yet inflame in after times ;

These, I foresee in fancy, my sweet fair,

Tho' your bright eyes be clos'd and cold my breath,

Shall lighten other loves and live in death.

SONNET CLXXI.

He proposes her to himself as a model of virtues which he should imitate.

SOUL! with such various faculties endued

To think, write, speak, to read, to see, to hear ;

My doating eyes! and thou, my faithful ear!

Where drinks my heart her counsels wise and good ;

Your fortune smiles; if after or before,

The path were won so badly follow'd yet,

Ye had not then her bright eyes' lustre met,

Nor trac'd her light feet earth's green carpet o'er.

Now with so clear a light, so sure a sign

'Twere shame to err or halt on the brief way

Which makes thee worthy of a home divine.

That better course, my weary will, essay!

To pierce the cloud of her sweet scorn be thine,

Pursuing her pure steps and heav'nly ray.

SONNET CLXXII.

He comforts himself with the thought that he will one day be envied for his good fortune in being born during her lifetime.

SWEET anger, sweet contempt, and truces sweet,
 Sweet ill, sweet trouble and sweet load I bear,
 Sweet speech, that sweetly dost the senses greet,
 Full of sweet flame, or fanning with sweet air:
 Lament not, Soul! but suffer and be still,
 Temper the bitter sweet encounter'd here.
 With this sweet fame, her love your heart does fill
 To whom I whisper'd *Thou alone art dear*.
 Haply e'en yet may some one say with sighs,
 Ting'd with sweet envy *Long and much he bore*
For love the best and brightest in his time.
 Other: *O fortune hostile to mine eyes,*
Which saw her never! that she came before,
And I too late in being, great thy crime!

CANZONE XIX.

Self-defence.

IF I said so, may I be hated by
 Her on whose love I live, without which I should die;
 If I said so, my days be sad and short,
 May my false soul some vile dominion court;
 If I said so, may ev'ry star to me
 Be hostile; round me grow
 Pale fear and jealousy;
 And she, my foe,
 As cruel still and cold as fair she aye must be.


If I said so, may Love upon my heart
 Expend his golden shafts, on her the leaden dart;
 Be Heaven and earth, and God and man my foe,
 And she still more severe if I said so;

If I said so, may he whose blind lights lead
Me straightway to my grave,
Trample yet worse his slave,
Nor she behave
Gentle and kind to me in look, or word, or deed.

If I said so, then thro' my brief life may
All that is hateful block my worthless weary way;
If I said so, may the proud frost in thee
Grow prouder as more fierce the fire in me;
If I said so, no more then may the warm
Sun or bright moon be view'd,
Nor maid, nor matron's form,
But one dread storm
Such as proud Pharaoh saw when Israel he pursued.

If I said so, despite each contrite sigh,
Let courtesy for me and kindly feeling die;
If I said so, that voice to anger swell,
Which was so sweet when first her slave I fell;
If I said so, I should offend whom I,
E'en from my earliest breath
Until my day of death,
Would gladly take,
Alone in cloister'd cell my single saint to make.

But if I said not so, may she who first,
In life's green youth, my heart to hope so sweetly nurst,
Deign yet once more my weary bark to guide
With native kindness o'er the troublous tide;
And graceful, grateful, as her wont before,
When, for I could no more,
My all, myself I gave,
To be her slave,
Forget not the deep faith with which I still adore.



I did not, could not, never would say so,
For all that gold can give, cities or courts bestow:
Let truth then take her old proud seat on high,
And low on earth let baffled falsehood lie.
Thou know'st me, Love! if aught my state within
Belief or care may win,
Tell her that I would call
Him blest o'er all,
Who doom'd like me to pine, dies ere his strife begin.

Rachel I sought, not Leah, to secure,
Nor could I this vain life with other fair endure,
And, should from earth Heav'n summon her agen,
Myself would gladly die
For her, or with her, when
Elijah's fiery car her pure soul wafts on high.

CANZONE XX.

He cannot live without seeing her, but would not die that he may still love her.

As pass'd the years which I have left behind,
To pass my future years I fondly thought,
Amid old studies, with desires the same;
But, from my Lady since I fail to find
The accustom'd aid, the work himself has wrought
Let Love regard my tempter who became;
Yet scarce I feel the shame
That, at my age, he makes me thus a thief
Of that bewitching light
For which my life is steep'd in cureless grief;
In youth I better might
Have ta'en the part which now I needs must take,
For less dishonour boyish errors make.

Those sweet eyes whence alone my life had health
Were ever of their high and heavenly charms,
So kind to me when first my thrall begun,
That, as a man whom not his proper wealth,
But some extern yet secret succour arms,
I liv'd, with them at ease, offending none:
Me now their glances shun
As one injurious and importunate,
Who, poor and hungry, did
Myself the very act, in better state
Which I, in others, chid.
From mercy thus if envy bar me, be
My amorous thirst and helplessness my plea.

In divers ways how often have I tried
If, reft of these, aught mortal could retain
E'en for a single day in life my frame:
But ah! my soul, which has no rest beside
Speeds back to those angelic lights again:
And I, tho' but of wax, turn to their flame,
Planting my mind's best aim
Where less the watch o'er what I love is sure;
As birds i' th' wildwood green,
Where less they fear will sooner take the lure,
So on her lovely mien,
Now one and now another look I turn,
Wherewith at once I nourish me and burn.

Strange sustenance! upon my death I feed,
And live in flames, a salamander rare!
And yet no marvel, as from love it flows.
A blithe lamb 'mid the harass'd fleecy breed,
Whilom I lay, whom now to worst despair
Fortune and Love, as is their wont, expose.
Winter with cold and snows,
With violets and roses Spring is rife,
And thus if I obtain

Some few poor aliments of else weak life,
Who can of theft complain?
So rich a fair should be content with this,
Tho' others live on hers, if nought she miss.

Who knows not what I am and still have been,
From the first day I saw those beauteous eyes,
Which alter'd of my life the natural mood?
Traverse all lands, explore each sea between,
Who can acquire all human qualities?
There some on odours live by Ind's vast flood!
Here light and fire are food
My frail and famish'd spirit to appease!
Love! more or nought bestow;
With lordly state low thrift but ill agrees;
Thou hast thy darts and bow,
Take with thy hands my not unwilling breath,
Life were well clos'd with honourable death.

Pent flames are strongest, and, if left to swell,
Not long by any means can rest unknown,
This own I, Love, and at your hands was taught.
When I thus silent burned, you knew it well;
Now e'en to me my cries are weary grown,
Annoy to far and near so long that wrought.
O false world! O vain thought!
O my hard fate! where now to follow thee?
Ah! from what meteor light
Sprung in my heart the constant hope which she,
Who, armour'd with your might,
Drags me to death, binds o'er it as a chain?
Yours is the fault tho' mine the loss and pain.

Thus bear I of true love the pains along,
Asking forgiveness of another's debt,
And for mine own; whose eyes should rather shun
That too great light, and to the Siren's song

My ears be clos'd: tho' scarce can I regret
 That so sweet poison should my heart o'errun.
 Yet would that all were done,
 That who the first wound gave my last would deal;
 For, if I right divine,
 It were best mercy soon my fate to seal;
 Since not a chance is mine
 That he may treat me better than before,
 'Tis well to die if death shut sorrow's door.

My Song! with fearless feet
 The field I keep, for death in flight were shame.
 Myself I needs must blame
 For these laments; tears, sighs, and death to meet,
 Such fate for her is sweet.
 Own, slave of Love, whose eyes these rhymes may catch,
 Earth has no good that with my grief can match.

SONNET CLXXIII.

He prays the Rhone, in its descent to her country, to kiss the hands and feet of
Laura.

O RAPID river, from thine Alpine source
 Who, eating round thee, dost thy name obtain,
 Like mine thy anxious aim the goal to gain,
 Where Nature thine and Love directs my course;
 Flow on in strength! thy stream nor sleep, nor toil
 Impede! but ere thy waters reach the sea,
 Where the calm sky and flow'ry banks in thee
 A clearer mirror find, O pause awhile!
 There is our sun of life, whose genial heat
 With softer verdure thy left shore adorns;
 Perchance, vain thought! e'en now my stay she mourns.
 Kiss her fair hand, her small and snowy feet,
 And let the kiss instead of language speak
The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

SONNET CLXXIV.

Absent from Vaucluse in his body, he still remains there in spirit.

THE lov'd hills where I left myself behind,
 Whence ever 'twas so hard my steps to tear
 Before me rise; at each remove I bear
 The dear load to my lot by Love consign'd.
 Often I wonder inly in my mind,
 That still the fair yoke holds me, which despair
 Would vainly break, that yet I breathe this air;
 Tho' long the chain its links but closer bind.
 And as a stag, sore struck by hunter's dart,
 Whose poison'd iron rankles in his breast,
 Flies and more grieves the more the chase is prest,
 So I, with Love's keen arrow in my heart,
 Endure at once my death and my delight,
 Rack'd with long grief, and weary with vain flight.

SONNET CLXXV.

His torment is new and unique, for she who causes does not perceive it.

FROM Spanish Ebro to Hydaspes old,
 Exploring ocean in its ev'ry nook,
 From the Red Sea to the cold Caspian shore,
 In earth, in heav'n one only Phoenix dwells.
 What fortunate, or what disastrous bird
 Omen'd my fate? which Parca winds my yarn,
 That I alone find pity deaf as asp,
 And wretched live who happy hop'd to be?
 Let me not speak of her, but him her guide,
 Who all her heart with love and sweetness fills,
 Gifts which, from him o'erflowing, follow her,
 Who, that my sweets may sour and cruel be,
 Dissembleth, careth not, or will not see
 That silver'd, ere my time, these temples are.

SONNET CLXXVI.

How and when he entered into Love's labyrinth, and why he still remains there.

PASSION impels where Love escorts and leads,
 Pleasure attracts me, habits old enchain,
 Hope with its flatt'ries comforts me again,
 And, at my harass'd heart, with fond touch pleads.
 Poor wretch! it trusts her still, and little heeds
 The blind and faithless leader of our train;
 Reason is dead, the senses only reign:
 One fond desire another still succeeds.
 Virtue and honour, beauty from on high,
 With winning words and many a graceful way
 My heart entangled in a snare so sweet.
 In thirteen hundred seven and twenty, I
 —'Twas April, the first hour, on its sixth day—
 Entered Love's labyrinth, whence is no retreat.

SONNET CLXXVII.

The faithful servant of Love for so long a time, his only reward has been tears.

HAPPY in dreams o' night, content to pine,
 Shadows to clasp, to bind the summer gale,
 On shoreless and unfathom'd sea to sail,
 To build on sands, and on the air design,
 The sun to doat on till these eyes of mine
 Abash'd before his noonday splendour fail,
 To chase adown a soft and sloping vale,
 The winged stag with frail and heavy kine;
 Weary and blind, save my own harm to all,
 Which day and night I seek with throbbing heart,
 On Love, on Laura, and on Death I call.
 Thus twenty years of long and cruel smart,
 In tears and sighs I've past, because I took
 Under ill stars, alas! both bait and hook.

SONNET CLXXVIII.

How he was enchanted.

GRACES which lib'ral Heav'n grants few to share :
 Rare virtue seldom witness'd by mankind ;
 Experienc'd judgment with light hairs combin'd ;
 High heav'nly beauty in a humble fair ;
 A gracefulness most excellent and rare ;
 A voice whose music sinks into the mind ;
 An angel port ; wit glowing and refin'd
 The hard to break, the high and haughty tear,
 And brilliant eyes which turn the heart to stone,
 Strong to enlighten Hell and night, and take
 Souls from our bodies and their own to make ;
 A speech where genius high yet gentle shone,
 Evermore broken by the balmiest sighs
 —Such magic spells transform'd me in this wise.

SESTINA VI.

The history of his love ; the difficulty of escape : prayer to God for help.

LIFE's three first stages train'd my soul in part
 To place its care on objects high and new,
 And to disparage what men often prize,
 But, left alone, and of her fatal course
 As yet uncertain, frolicsome, and free,
 She enter'd at spring-time a lovely wood.

A tender flow'r there was, born in that wood
 The day before, whose root was in a part
 High and impervious e'en to spirit free ;
 For many snares were there of forms so new,
 And such desire impell'd my sanguine course,
 That to lose freedom were to gain a prize.

Dear, sweet, yet perilous and painful prize!
Which quickly drew me to that verdant wood,
Doom'd to mislead me midway in life's course;
The world I since have ransack'd part by part,
For rhymes, or stones, or sap of simples new,
Which yet might give me back the spirit free.

But ah! I feel my body must be free
From that hard knot which is its richest prize,
Ere medicine old or incantations new
Can heal the wounds which pierc'd me in that wood,
Thorny and troublous, where I play'd such part,
Leaving it halt who enter'd with hot course.

Yes! full of snares and sticks, a difficult course
Have I to run, where easy foot and sure
Were rather needed, healthy in each part;
Thou, Lord, who still of pity hast the prize,
Stretch to me thy right hand in this wild wood,
And let thy sun dispel my darkness new.

Look on my state, amid temptations new
Which, interrupting my life's tranquil course,
Have made me denizen of darkling wood;
If good, restore me, fetterless and free,
My wand'ring consort, and be thine the prize
If yet with thee I find her in blest part.

Lo! thus in part I put my questions new,
If mine be any prize, or run its course,
Be my soul free, or captiv'd in close wood.

SONNET CLXXIX.

She combines in herself the charms of mind and person, of virtue and of nature.

HIGH birth in humble life, reserv'd yet kind,
 On youth's gay flow'r ripe fruits of age and rare,
 A virtuous heart within a lofty mind,
 A happy spirit in a pensive air;
 Her planet, nay Heav'n's King, has fitly shrin'd
 All gifts and graces in this Lady fair,
 True honour, purest praises, worth refin'd,
 Above what rapt dreams of best poets are.
 Virtue and Love so rich in her unite,
 With natural beauty dignified address,
 Gestures that still a silent grace express,
 And in her eyes I know not what strange light
 That makes the noonday dark, the dusk night clear,
 Bitter the sweet, and e'en sad absence dear.

SONNET CLXXX.

He must still weep, but her injustice pains him more than his own grief.

NOT in the day, not in the day alone,
 But at dead night, when wretched mortals shake
 The sense of evil off, and sweet rest take,
 Me tyrant Love awakes to muse and moan.
 A melancholy rheum consumes mine eyes,
 Sorrow my bosom; I of all mankind
 The lowest surely am, to whose tost mind
 Fate ev'ry hope of future peace denies.
 Day after day, from morn till dewy eve
 Brings softly in the still night's starry train,
 No hope to love I find, no end to pain:
 Her crime and cruelty the more I grieve
 Severer grow: what men call life to me
 Seems but a slower harder death to be.

SONNET CLXXXI.

He once sang of her to gain her pity, or to show her cruelty, but now in praise of her beauty, which renders even death welcome to him.

EREWHILE I labour'd with complaint so true,
 And in such fervid rhymes to make me heard,
 Seem'd as at last some spark of pity stirr'd
 In the hard heart which frost in summer knew.
 Th' unfriendly cloud, whose cold veil o'er it grew,
 Broke at the first breath of mine ardent word,
 Or low'ring still she others' blame incurr'd
 Her bright and killing eyes who thus withdrew.
 No ruth for self I crave, for her no hate;
 I wish not this, *that* passes pow'r of mine:
 Such was mine evil star and cruel fate.
 But I shall ever sing her charms divine,
 That, when I have resign'd this mortal breath,
 The world may know how sweet to me was death.

SONNET CLXXXII.

Laura is as a sun: all is bright while she lives: all will be dark if she die.

IF amid many ladies fair and gay
 She come, whose equal in the world was ne'er,
 The rest at her bright presence seem to fare,
 As fare the lesser stars at light of day.
 Love at my ear in whispers seems to say,
So long as earth her lovely form shall bear
Life will be sweet; when seen no longer there
My reign and virtue pass with her away.
 Should Nature from the skies take moon and sun,
 From heav'n the winds, from earth its leaves and grass,
 From man should intellect and language pass;
 Should from the lifeless sea its waters run,
 So lonely and obscure my life would be
 If Death her dear eyes close and hide from me.

SONNET CLXXXIII.

Morning.

OF birds the wak'ning warble and fond wail,
 The voice of liquid crystals that pursue
 Their lively race the bright fresh river thro',
 At early morn with music fill the vale;
 She, whose true love can ne'er forget or fail,
 The snow whose face, whose tresses gold outdo,
 Combing her old man's hair of silvery hue,
 Wakes me with gen'ral Nature's grateful hail
 To greet the morning and its mate the sun,
 But more that other orb, beneath whose pow'r
 I still as erst am dazzled and undone.
 Both have I seen in the same spot and hour
 Together rising, this the stars to dim,
 That from Heav'n's face to extinguish even him.

SONNET CLXXXIV.

The singular and marvellous beauties of Laura.

WHENCE, and from what rich vein, took Love the gold
 Which wrought those fine fair locks? and on what thorn
 Those roses cull'd? where found those gems of morn
 Tender and fresh, here shrin'd in mortal mould?
 And whence the virgin pearls, which captive hold
 Sweet words of modesty and goodness born,
 The charms, divine and many, that adorn
 A brow serener than the skies unfold?
 Caught from what angels, in what seraph sphere
 That song, whose heav'nly sweets my peace so mar
 Needs little more my spirit quite to kill?
 Sprung from what sun the lovely light severe
 Of those dear eyes, which bring me peace and war,
 Troubling from frost to fire my poor heart still.

SONNET CLXXXV.

Looking on her, he feels as it were dying, but cannot tear himself away.

WHAT destiny of mine, what fraud, or force,
 Unarm'd, again conducts me to the field,
 Where never came I but with shame to yield?
 'Scape I or fall, which better is or worse?
 —Not worse but better; from so sweet a source
 Shine in my heart those lights, so bright reveal'd
 The fatal fire, e'en now as then, which seal'd
 My doom, tho' twenty years have roll'd their course.
 I feel death's messengers, when those dear eyes,
 Dazzling me from afar, I see appear,
 And if on me they turn as she draw near,
 Love with such sweetness tempts me then and tries,
 Tell it I cannot, nor recal in sooth,
 For wit and language fail to reach the truth!

SONNET CLXXXVI.

Not finding her with her friends, he asks them why she is absent and they alone.

P. PENSIVE and glad, accompanied, alone,
 Ladies, who cheat the time with converse gay,
 Where does my life and where my death delay?
 Why not, with you, her form, as usual, shown?
 L. Glad are we her rare lustre to have known,
 And sad from her dear company to stay,
 Which jealousy and envy keep away
 O'er others' bliss, as their own ill, who moan.
 P. Who lovers can restrain, or give them law?
 L. No one the soul, harshness and rage the frame;
 As erst in us this now in her appears.
 As oft the face betrays the heart, we saw
 Clouds that obscuring her high beauty came,
 And in her eyes the dewy trace of tears.

SONNET CLXXXVII.

His nights are like his days passed in torment.

WHEN in the sea sinks the sun's golden light,
 And on my mind and nature darkness lies,
 With the pale moon, faint stars and clouded skies
 I pass a weary and a painful night :
 To her who hears me not I then rehearse
 My sad life's fruitless toils, early and late ;
 And with the world and with my gloomy fate,
 With Love, with Laura and myself, converse.
 Sleep is forbid me : I have no repose,
 But sighs and groans instead, till morn returns,
 And tears, with which mine eyes a sad heart feeds ;
 Then comes the dawn, the thick air clearer grows,
 But not my soul ; the sun which in it burns
 Alone can cure the grief his fierce warmth breeds.

SONNET CLXXXVIII.

The purity of his love and the excess of his sufferings.

IF fond fidelity, a heart sincere,
 A pleasing languor, a subdued desire,
 If honest vows kindled to gen'rous fire,
 If lengthen'd error in love's lab'rinth dear,
 If on the brow each thought, each feeling seen,
 Or doubtfully in broken accents heard,
 With trembling now and now with shame preferr'd,
 If love's pale hue worn on the faded mien,
 If than myself more dear another held,
 If ceaselessly to weep, unpitied sigh,
 By grief, chagrin and ire in turns impell'd,
 When absent if to burn, to freeze when nigh,
 If these the ill's fate dooms me still to bear,
 Tho' mine the penance be, the guilt is thine, my fair !

SONNET CLXXXIX.

Happy who steered the boat, or drove the car, wherein she sate and sang.

TWELVE ladies, their rare toil who lightly bore,
 Rather twelve stars encircling a bright sun,
 I saw, gay-seated a small bark upon,
 Whose like the waters never cleav'd before:
 Not such took Jason to the fleece of yore,
 Whose fatal gold has ev'ry heart now won,
 Nor such the shepherd boy's, by whom undone
 Troy mourns, whose fame has past the wide world o'er.
 I saw them next on a triumphal car,
 Where, known by her chaste cherub ways, aside
 My Laura sate and to them sweetly sung.
 Things not of earth to man such visions are!
 Blest Tiphys! blest Automedon! to guide
 The bark, or car of band so bright and young.

SONNET CXK.

Far from the sight of his beloved, life is miserable by night as by day.

NEVER was bird, spoil'd of its young, more sad,
 Or wild beast in his lair more lone than me,
 Now that no more that lovely face I see,
 The only sun my fond eyes ever had.
 In ceaseless sorrow is my chief delight:
 My food to poison turns, to grief my joy;
 The night is torture, dark the clearest sky,
 And my lone pillow a hard field of fight.
 Sleep is indeed, as has been well exprest,
 Akin to death, for it the heart removes
 From the dear thought in which alone I live.
 Land above all with plenty, beauty blest!
 Ye flow'ry plains, green banks and shady groves!
 Ye hold the treasure for whose loss I grieve!

SONNET CXCI.

He envies the air she breathes, the stream which glides by her.

AIR! 'mid those light and flowing tresses oft
 Moving, and mov'd by them, in fairy whirls,
 And softly scattering their rich gold aloft,
 Catchest their fall, and fondest in fresh curls;
 Thou breathest on her eyes, whence wasps of love
 So pierce me that I feel and mourn their wound,
 And fondly flutt'ring round my treasure rove
 Till dash'd by haste or terror to the ground:
 Methinks I meet her now; and now 'tis plain
 That distance parts us; now I sink, now soar,
 Now my desire, and now the truth I see.
 Blest air, with our bright living ray remain,
 Flow, swift and shiny brook, thy pebbles o'er,
 Why can I not exchange my course with thee?

SONNET CXCH.

Under the figure of a laurel, he shows how his love for Laura has grown and is
rooted in his heart's core.

MY poor heart op'ning with his puissant hand
 Love planted there, as in its home, to dwell
 A Laurel, green and bright, whose hues might well
 In rivalry with proudest emeralds stand:
 Plough'd by my pen and by my heart-sighs fann'd,
 Cool'd by the soft rain from mine eyes that fell,
 It grew in grace, upbreathing a sweet smell,
 Unparallel'd in any age or land.
 Fair fame, bright honour, virtue firm, rare grace,
 The chastest beauty in celestial frame,
 These be the roots whence birth so noble came.
 Such ever in my mind her form I trace,
 A happy burden and a holy thing,
 To which on rev'rent knee with loving pray'r I cling.

SONNET CXCIIL

Though in the midst of pain, he deems himself the happiest of all men.

I SANG, who now lament; nor less delight
 Than in my song I found, in tears I find;
 For on the cause and not effect inclin'd,
 My senses still desire to scale that height:
 Whence, mildly if she smile or hardly smite,
 Cruel and cold her acts, or meek and kind,
 All I endure, nor care what weights they bind,
 E'en tho' her rage would break my armour quite.
 Let Love and Laura, world and fortune join
 And still pursue their usual course for me,
 I care not, if unblest, in life to be.
 Let me or burn to death or living pine,
 No gentler state than mine beneath the sun,
 Since from a source so sweet my bitters run.

SONNET CXCIV.

She relents.

I WEPT but now I sing; its heav'nly light
 That living sun conceals not from my view,
 But virtuous love therein revealeth true
 His holy purposes and precious might;
 Whence, as his wont, such flood of sorrow springs
 To shorten of my life the friendless course,
 Nor bridge, nor ford, nor oar, nor sails have force
 To forward mine escape, nor even wings.
 But so profound and of so full a vein
 My suff'ring is, so far its shore appears
 Scarcely to reach it can e'en thought contrive:
 Nor palm, nor laurel Pity prompts to gain
 But tranquil olive, and the dark sky clears,
 And checks my grief and wills me to survive.

SONNET CXCV.

He fears that an illness which has attacked the eyes of Laura may deprive him of their sight.

I LIV'D so tranquil, with my lot content,
 No sorrow visited, nor envy pin'd,
 To other loves if fortune were more kind
 One pang of mine their thousand joys outwent;
 But those bright eyes, whence never I repent
 The pains I feel, nor wish them less to find,
 So dark a cloud and heavy now does blind,
 Seems as my sun of life in them were spent.
 O Nature! mother pitiful yet stern,
 Whence is the pow'r which prompts thy wayward deeds,
 Such lovely things to make and mar in turn?
 True, from one living fount all pow'r proceeds:
 But how could'st thou consent, great God of Heaven,
 That aught should rob the world of what thy love had
 given?

SONNET CXCVI.

Against anger. (Paraphrase of a passage in Horace, Ep. ii. v. 62.)

WHAT tho' the ablest artists of old time
 Left us the sculptur'd bust, the imag'd form
 Of conq'ring Alexander, wrath o'ercame
 And made him for the while than Philip less?
 Wrath to such fury valiant Tydeus drove
 That dying he devour'd his slaughter'd foe;
 Wrath made not Sylla merely blear of eye,
 But blind to all, and kill'd him in the end.
 Well Valentinian knew that to such pain
 Wrath leads, and Ajax, he whose death it wrought,
 Strong against many, 'gainst himself at last.
 Wrath is brief madness, and, when unrestrain'd,
 Long madness, which its master often leads
 To shame and crime, and haply e'en to death.

SONNET CXCVII.

The weakness of Laura's eyes passes into his own.

STRANGE, passing strange adventure! when from one
 Of the two brightest eyes which ever were,
 Beholding it with pain disturb'd and dim,
 Mov'd influence which my own made dull and weak.
 I had return'd, to break the weary fast
 Of seeing her, my sole care in this world,
 Kinder to me were Heav'n and Love than e'en
 If all their other gifts together join'd,
 When from the right eye—rather the right sun—
 Of my dear Lady to my right eye came
 The ill which less my pain than pleasure makes;
 As if it intellect possess'd and wings
 It pass'd, as stars that shoot along the sky:
 Nature and pity then pursued their course.

SONNET CXCVIII.

He formerly sought, but now he hates solitude.

ROOM! which to me hast been a port and shield
 From life's rude daily tempests for long years,
 Now the full fountain of my nightly tears
 Which in the day I bear for shame conceal'd:
 Bed! which, in woes so great, wert wont to yield
 Comfort and rest, an urn of doubts and fears
 Love o'er thee now from those fair hands uprears,
 Cruel and cold to me alone reveal'd.
 But e'en than solitude and rest, I flee
 More from myself and melancholy thought,
 In whose vain quest my soul has heav'nward flown.
 The crowd long hateful, hostile e'en to me,
 Strange tho' it sound, for refuge have I sought,
 Such fear have I to find myself alone!

SONNET CXIX.

He excuses himself for visiting Laura too often and loving her too much.

ALAS! Love bears me where I would not go,
 And well I see how duty is transgrest,
 And how to her who, queen-like, rules my breast,
 More than my wont importunate I grow.
 Never from rocks wise sailor guarded so
 His ship of richest merchandise possest,
 As evermore I shield my bark distress
 From shocks of her hard pride that would o'erthrow.
 Torrents of tears, fierce winds of infinite sighs
 —For, in my sea, nights horrible and dark
 And pitiless winter reign—have driv'n my bark,
 Sail-less and helm-less where it shatter'd lies,
 Or, drifting at the mercy of the main,
 Trouble to others bears, distress to me and pain.

SONNET CC.

Since his fault arises from love, he prays him to let her know this, that so she may still forgive him.

O LOVE, I err, and I mine error own,
 As one who burns, whose fire within him lies
 And aggravates his grief, while reason dies
 With its own martyrdom almost o'erthrown.
 I strove mine ardent longing to restrain
 Her fair calm face that I might ne'er disturb:
 I can no more; falls from my hand the curb,
 And my despairing soul is bold again;
 Wherefore if higher than her wont she aim,
 The act is thine, who fir'st and spur'st her so,
 No way too rough or steep for her to go:
 But the rare heav'nly gifts are most to blame
 Shrin'd in herself: let her at least feel this,
 Lest of my faults her pardon I should miss.

SESTINA VII

He despairs of escape from the torments by which he is surrounded.

NOT Ocean holds such swarms amid his waves,
Not overhead, where circles the pale moon,
Were stars so numerous ever seen by night,
Nor dwell so many birds among the woods,
Nor plants so many clothe the field or hill,
As holds my tost heart busy thoughts each eve.

Each day I hope that this my latest eve
Shall part from my quick clay the sad salt waves,
And leave me in last sleep on some cold hill;
So many torments man beneath the moon
Ne'er bore as I have borne; this know the woods
Thro' which I wander lonely day and night.

For never have I had a tranquil night,
But ceaseless sighs instead from morn till eve.
Since love first made me tenant of the woods:
The sea, ere I can rest, shall lose his waves,
The sun his light shall borrow from the moon,
And April flow'rs be blasted o'er each hill.

Thus, to myself a prey, from hill to hill,
Pensive by day I roam, and weep at night,
No one state mine, but changeful as the moon;
And when I see approaching the brown eve
Sighs from my bosom from my eyes fall waves,
The herbs to moisten and to move the woods.

Hostile the cities, friendly are the woods
To thoughts like mine, which, on this lofty hill,

Mingle their murmur with the moaning waves,
 Thro' the sweet silence of the spangled night,
 So that the livelong day, I wait the eve,
 When the sun sets and rises the fair moon.

Would, like Endymion, 'neath the enamour'd moon,
 That slumbering I were lain in leafy woods,
 And that ere vesper she who makes my eve,
 With Love and Luna on that favour'd hill,
 Alone, would come, and stay but one sweet night,
 While stood the sun nor sought his western waves.

Upon the hard waves, 'neath the beaming moon,
 Song, that art born of night amid the woods,
 Thou shalt a rich hill see to-morrow eve!

SONNET CCL.

The kiss of honour.

A NOBLE nature, a superior mind,
 A spotless soul, prompt aspect and keen eye,
 Quick penetration, contemplation high
 And truly worthy of the breast which shrin'd :
 In bright assembly lovely ladies join'd
 To grace that festival with gratulant joy,
 Amid so many and fair faces nigh
 Soon did the fairest his good judgment find :
 Of riper age and higher rank the rest
 Gently he beckon'd with his hand aside,
 And lovingly drew near the perfect ONE :
 So courteously her eyes and brow he prest,
 All at his choice in fond approval vied—
 Envy thro' my sole veins at that sweet freedom run.

SESTINA VIII.

She is so deaf and cruel as never to be moved by his tears, and for his verses she cares not.

SWEETLY as when, at blush of dawn, the gale
Towards the bright east is wont to move the flow'rs,
And varied birds each waken the glad verse,
So sweetly feel I move within my soul
My thoughts to her who rules them all in force,
Stirring me to resume my own old notes.

Would that my often sighs in such soft notes
I could attune as Laura might regale,
By reason ruling who rules me by force:
But Winter first shall be the time of flow'rs,
Ere love can blossom in that haughty soul,
Which never car'd for rhyme nor glow'd with verse.

Alas! how many a tear, how many a verse
Have I already shed! how oft my notes
Have tried in vain to mould and melt her soul!
She stands as the stern Alp in some soft gale,
Which well may bend the foliage and the flow'rs,
But nought availeth against greater force.

That men and gods alike are sway'd by force
Of love—for so we read in prose and verse—
I prov'd at the first April of the flow'rs:
Now neither my good Lord, nor his fond notes,
Nor tears, nor pray'rs of mine with her avail
To draw from life or martyrdom my soul.

In this last need, O miserable soul!
Employ thy utmost wit, thine ev'ry force,

While o'er life's sea yet wafts us the fair gale;
 Nought earthly can resist the pow'r of verse;
 The fierce snake is enchanted with its notes,
 And Winter smiles adorn'd with summer flow'rs.

Smile o'er each plain the herblets and the flow'rs,
 Nor can it be that her angelic soul
 Feels not the influence of these loving notes:
 Yet if hard fortune be of greater force,
 Singing my woes and weeping forth my verse,
 As some hurt heifer vex I the soft gale.

In nets I bind the gale, in ice the flow'rs,
 When I by verse would move the cold hard soul,
 Which prizes not Love's force, nor sweetest notes.

SONNET CCII.

He bids her find in herself the reason why he cannot exist without her.

LOVE have I pray'd, and, Lady, still I pray,
 With you—our pleasure-pain, our bitter-sweet—
 My cause to plead, if I with faith complete
 E'er wander from the path of right away.
 I cannot, and I would not e'er gainsay
 That reason, whose light check all good souls greet,
 Suffers in me from headstrong will defeat,
 At times which leads me where I must obey.
 You, with a heart which Heav'n with wit's best fire
 And its own rarest virtue thus illumines
 —More ne'er was giv'n by kindest star from high—
 Should pitying say, without or scorn or ire,
What can he else? my beauty him consumes,
For he is reckless, and so lovely I.

SONNET CCIII.

His sorrow for the illness of Laura increases, not lessens his flame.

THE sovereign Lord, 'gainst whom of no avail
 Concealment, or resistance is, or flight,
 My mind had kindled to a new delight
 By his own amorous and ardent ail:
 Tho' his first blow, transfixing my best mail
 Were mortal sure, to push his triumph quite
 He took a shaft of sorrow in his right,
 So my soft heart on both sides to assail.
 A burning wound the one shed fire and flame,
 The other tears, which ever grief distils,
 Thro' eyes for your weak health that are as rills.
 But no relief from either fountain came
 My bosom's conflagration to abate,
 Nay passion grew by very pity great.

SONNET CCIV.

He bids his heart return to Laura, and only then perceives that it never left her.

P. LOOK on that hill, my fond but harass'd heart!
 Yestreen we left her there, who 'gan to take
 Some care of us and friendlier looks to dart;
 Now from our eyes she draws a very lake:
 Return alone—I love to be apart—
 Try, if perchance the day will ever break
 To mitigate our still increasing smart,
 Partner and prophet of my lifelong ache.
 H. O wretch! in whom vain thoughts and idle swell,
 Thou, who thyself hast tutor'd to forget,
 Speak'st to thy heart as if 'twere with thee yet?
 When to thy greatest bliss thou saidst farewell,
 Thou didst depart alone: it stay'd with her,
 Nor cares from those bright eyes, its home, to stir.

SONNET CCV.

The same idea pursued.

FRESH, shaded hill! with flow'rs and verdure crown'd,
 Where, in fond musings, or with music sweet,
 To earth a heav'n-sent spirit! takes her seat
 She who from all the world has honour found.
 Forsaking me, to her my fond heart bound
 —Divorce for aye were welcome as discreet—
 Notes where the turf is mark'd by her fair feet,
 Or from these eyes for her in sorrow drown'd,
 Then inly whispers as her steps advance,
Would for awhile that wretch were here alone
Who pines already o'er his bitter lot.
 She conscious smiles. Not equal is the chance,
 An Eden thou, while I a heartless stone.
 O holy, happy and beloved spot!

SONNET CCVI.

To a friend, in love like himself, he can give no advice but to raise his soul to God.

THE bad oppresses me, the worse dismisses
 To which so broad and plain a path I see;
 My spirit, to like frenzy led with thee,
 Tried by the same hard thoughts, in dotage strays,
 Nor knows if peace or war of God it prays,
 Tho' great the loss and deep the shame to me.
 But why pine longer? Best our lot will be,
 What Heav'n's high will ordains when man obeys.
 Tho' I of that great honour worthless prove
 Offer'd by thee—herein Love leads to err,
 Who often makes the sound eye to see wrong—
 My counsel this, instant on Heav'n above
 Thy soul to elevate, thy heart to spur,
 For tho' the time be short, the way is long.

SONNET CCVII.

The two roses.

Two brilliant roses, fresh from Paradise,
 Which there, on May-day morn, in beauty sprung
 Fair gift, and by a lover old and wise
 Equally offer'd to two lovers young;
 At speech so tender and such winning guise,
 As transports from a savage might have wrung,
 A loving lustre lit their mutual eyes,
 And instant on their cheeks a soft blush hung.
The sun ne'er look'd upon a lovelier pair,
 With a sweet smile and gentle sigh he said,
 Pressing the hands of both and turn'd away.
 Of words and roses each alike had share.
 E'en now my worn heart thrills with joy and dread,
 O happy eloquence! O blessed day!

SONNET CCVIII.

He prays that he may die before Laura.

THE balmy gale, that, with its tender sigh,
 Moves the green laurel and the golden hair,
 Makes with its graceful visitings and rare
 The gazer's spirit from his body fly.
 A sweet and snow-white rose in hard thorns set!
 Where in the world her fellow shall we find?
 The glory of our age! Creator kind,
 Grant that ere hers my death shall first be met.
 So the great public loss I may not see,
 The world without its sun, in darkness left,
 And from my desolate eyes their sole light reft,
 My mind with which no other thoughts agree,
 Mine ears which by no other sound are stirr'd
 Except her ever pure and gentle word.

SONNET CCIX.

His praises may seem excessive, but, on the contrary, they are not worthy of her.

HAPLY to some my style may seem too free
 In praise of her who holds my being's chain,
 Queen of her sex describing her to reign,
 Wise, winning, good, fair, noble, chaste to be :
 To me it seems not so ; I fear that she
 My lays as low and trifling may disdain,
 Worthy a higher and a better strain
 —Who thinks not with me let him come and see.
 Then will he say, *She whom his wishes seek*
Is one indeed whose grace and worth might tire
The Muses of all lands and either lyre.
 But mortal tongue for state divine is weak
 And may not soar ; by flattery and force,
 As Fate not choice ordains, Love rules its course

SONNET CCX.

Whoever has seen her must confess that he cannot praise her enough.

THE wondrous pow'r which Heav'n and Nature share
 Who seeks to know, let him come here and see
 This sun of being, not alone to me
 But the blind world, which has for worth no care.
 Let him come soon for Death delights to tear
 The brightest down and lets the worthless be ;
 Expected long in God's own kingdom, she
 Passes and lasts not, mortal tho' so fair :
 Then will he see, if he arrive in time,
 Each virtue, beauty, every noble use
 With wondrous temper in one body met,
 And instant own, how weak and cold my rhyme,
 His mind o'ermaster'd by that light profuse,
 But if he wait, his life shall grief beset.

SONNET CCXI.

Thinking of the day when he left her so sad, he fears for her safety.

WHAT dread is mine when I recal the day
 When, with a weight of melancholy thought,
 I left the Lady of my heart: to nought
 So oft and willingly its wishes stray.
 Again I see her, humble, modest still
 Tho' fairest of the fair, e'en as a rose
 'Mid meaner flow'rs, nor joy nor grief she shows,
 As one who fears but feels no other ill.
 The charms were laid aside which grac'd her oft,
 The pearls, and garlands, and the festal dress,
 The smile and song, her gracious speech and soft.
 And thus I left my life, in deep distress:
 Bad omens and sad dreams, black thoughts assail
 My spirit since—Grant Heav'n that all may fail!

SONNET CCXII.

She appears to him in a dream, and destroys his hope of again seeing her.

EREWHILE, in dreams of sleep, to cheer and grace
 With her angelic presence dear and bright,
 Came Laura; now to sadden and affright
 With grief and fear whence no escape I trace;
 Often I seem to see in her fair face
 True sympathy with grief profound unite,
 And words to hear, faith strength'ning into sight,
 Which happiness and hope for ever chase.
Rememb'rest thou, she asks, that last sad eve?
Gush'd to thine eyes the heart's full sorrow when
Forc'd by the growing hour I took my leave:
I had nor pow'r nor wish to tell it then,
I tell it to thee now as proved and true,
Hope not on earth again my form to view.

SONNET CCXIII.

He cannot believe in her death, but if true, he prays God to take him also from life.

O MISERY! horror! can it then be true
 That the sweet light before its time is spent,
 'Mid all its pains which could my life content,
 And ever with fresh hopes of good renew?
 If so, why sounds not other channels thro',
 Nor only from herself, the great event?
 No! God and Nature could not thus consent,
 And my dark fears are groundless and undue.
 Still it delights my heart to hope once more
 The welcome sight of that enchanting face,
 The glory of our age, and life to me.
 But if, to her eternal home to soar,
 That heav'nly spirit have left her earthly place,
 O then not distant may my last day be!

SONNET CCXIV.

To his longing to see her again is now added the fear of seeing her no more.

UNCERTAIN of my state, I weep and sing,
 I hope and tremble, amid rhymes and sighs
 I ease my load, while Love his utmost tries
 How worse my sore afflicted heart to sting.
 Will her sweet seraph face again e'er bring
 Their former light to these despairing eyes,
 (What to expect, alas! or how advise)
 Or must eternal grief my bosom wring?
 For heav'n, which justly it deserves to win,
 It cares not what on earth may be their fate,
 Whose sun it was, where centred their sole gaze.
 Such terror, so perpetual warfare in,
 Chang'd from my former self, I live of late
 As one who, midway doubts, and fears and strays.

SONNET COXV.

He sighs for those glances from which, for his great loss, he is compelled to keep
away.

O GENTLE glances! winning words and wise!
 Shall I behold you once again or hear?
 Light locks, wherewith my heart Love sternly ties,
 Then leads his fetter'd captive to his bier!
 O lovely face! in hard fate giv'n to me,
 Never with joy, but still with sorrow fraught:
 O amorous fraud! O dear delusion! ye
 A pleasure give which only pain has brought,
 For, if a ray from those bright eyes and sweet
 (Where all my life and its best thoughts depend)
 Of virtuous favour e'er on me descend,
 Sudden, as ships or horses, strong and fleet,
 Fortune, attendant ever for my harm,
 Summons me thence and scatters ev'ry charm.

SONNET COXVI.

Hearing no news, he fears that she is dead: if so, his own end must also be near.

No tidings yet—I listen but in vain;
 Of her, my beautiful beloved foe,
 What or to think or say I nothing know,
 So thrills my heart, my fond hopes so sustain.
 Danger to some has in their beauty lain;
 Fairer and chaster she than others show;
 God haply seeks to snatch from earth below
 Virtue's best friend that Heav'n a star may gain,
 Or rather sun. If what I dread be nigh,
 My life, its trials long, its brief repose
 Are ended all. O cruel absence! why
 Didst thou remove me from the menac'd woes?
 My short sad story is already done,
 And midway in its course my vain race run.

SONNET CCXVII.

Contrary to the wont of lovers, he prefers morning to evening.

TRANQUIL and happy loves in this agree
 The evening to desire and morning hate,
 On me at eve redoubled sorrows wait;
 Morning is still the happier hour for me,
 For then my sun and Nature's oft I see
 Op'ning at once the Orient's rosy gate,
 So match'd in beauty and in lustre great,
 Heav'n seems enamour'd of our earth to be!
 As when in verdant leaf the dear boughs burst
 Whose roots have since so centred in my core
 Another than myself is cherish'd more.
 Thus the two hours contrast, day's last and first:
 Reason it is who calms me to desire,
 And fear and hate who fiercer feeds my fire.

SONNET CCXVIII.

Could he but be revenged on her! but she so torments him day and night, that even in sleep his soul goes to visit her.

O. THAT from her some vengeance I could wrest
 With words and glances who my peace destroys,
 And then abash'd, for my worse sorrow, flies
 Veiling her eyes so cruel yet so blest;
 Thus mine afflicted spirits and oppress
 By sure degrees she sorely drains and dries,
 And, in my heart, as savage lion, cries
 Even at night when most I should have rest.
 My soul, which sleep expels from his abode,
 The body leaves, and, from its trammels free,
 Seeks her whose mien so often menace show'd.
 I marvel much, if heard its advent be,
 That while to her it spake, and o'er her wept,
 And round her clung, asleep she alway kept.

SONNET CCXIX.

On Laura putting her hand before her eyes while he was looking on her.

ON the fair face for which I long and sigh
 Mine eyes were fasten'd with desire intense,
 When, to my fond thoughts, Love in best reply,
 Her honour'd hand uplifting, shut me thence.
 My heart there caught—as fish a fair hook by,
 Or as a young bird on a limed fence—
 For good deeds follow from example high,
 To truth directed not its busied sense.
 But of its one desire my vision reft,
 As dreamingly, soon op'd itself a way,
 Which clos'd, its bliss imperfect had been left:
 My soul between those rival glories lay,
 Fill'd with a heavenly and new delight,
 Whose strange surpassing sweets engross'd it quite.

SONNET CCXX.

A smiling welcome which Laura gave him unexpectedly, almost kills him with joy.

LIVE sparks were glist'ning from her twin bright eyes,
 So sweet on me whose lightning flashes beam'd,
 And softly from a feeling heart and wise,
 Of lofty eloquence a rich flood stream'd:
 Even the memory serves to wake my sighs
 When I recal that day so glad esteem'd,
 And in my heart its sinking spirit dies
 As some late grace her colder wont redeem'd.
 My soul in pain and grief that most has been
 (How great the pow'r of constant habit is!)
 Seems weakly 'neath its double joy to lean:
 For at the sole taste of unusual bliss,
 Trembling with fear, or thrill'd by idle hope,
 Oft on the point I've been life's door to ope.

SONNET CCXXI.

Thinking always of Laura, it pains him to remember where she is left.

STILL have I sought a life of solitude—
 This know the rivers and each wood and plain—
 That I might 'scape the blind and sordid train
 Who from the path have flown of peace and good :
 Could I my wish obtain, how vainly would
 This cloudless climate woo me to remain ;
 Sarga's embow'ring woods I'd seek again,
 And sing, weep, wander by its friendly flood.
 But ah ! my fortune hostile still to me,
 Compels me where I must, indignant, find
 Amid the mire my fairest treasure thrown :
 Yet to my hand, not all unworthy, she
 Now proves herself, at least for once, more kind,
 Since—but alone to Love and Laura be it known.

SONNET CCXXII.

The beauty of Laura is Nature's glory.

IN one fair star I saw two brilliant eyes,
 With sweetness, modesty so glist'ning o'er,
 That soon those graceful nests of love before,
 My worn heart learnt all others to despise :
 Equal'd not her whoever won the prize
 In ages gone on any foreign shore ;
 Not she to Greece whose wond'rous beauty bore
 Unnumber'd ills, to Troy death's anguish'd cries :
 Not the fair Roman, who, with ruthless blade,
 Piercing her chaste and outrag'd bosom, fled
 Dishonour worse than death, like charms display'd ;
 Such excellence should brightest glory shed
 On Nature, as on me supreme delight,
 But ah ! too lately come, too soon it takes its flight.

SONNET CCXXIII.

The eyes of Laura are the school of virtue.

FEELS any fair the noble wish to claim
 Of wisdom, worth and courtesy the prize,
 Then let her seek it in the glorious eyes
 Of her, my foe, whom men my Lady name.
 How to love God, how conquer honest fame,
 How chastity with beauty best allies,
 How straight the pathway to her kindred skies
 Which wait her coming—*there* he'll learn the same.
 There the dear speech surpassing minstrel strain,
 Th' expressive silence, and the seraph ways
 Which human wit can ne'er in words explain.
 Infinite beauty dazzling ev'ry gaze
 Not there is learnt, such sweet lights are not gain'd
 By dint of art but from Heav'n's grace obtained.

SONNET CCXXIV.

Honour to be preferred to life.

METHINKS that life in lovely woman first,
 And after life true honour should be dear;
 Nay, wanting honour, of all wants the worst,
 Friend! naught remains of lov'd or lovely here,
 And who alas! has honour's barrier burst,
 Unsex'd and dead, tho' fair she yet appear,
 Leads a vile life, in shame and torment curst,
 A lingering death, where all is dark and drear.
 To me no marvel was Lucretia's end,
 Save that she needed, when that last disgrace
 Alone suffic'd to kill, a sword to die.
 Sophists in vain the contrary defend:
 Their arguments are feeble all and base,
 And truth alone triumphant mounts on high.

CANZONE XXI.

Self-conflict.

CEASELESS I think, and in each wasting thought
So strong a pity for myself appears,
That often it has brought
My harass'd heart to new yet natural tears;
Seeing each day my end of life draw nigh,
Instant in pray'r, I ask of God the wings
With which the spirit springs,
Freed from its mortal coil, to bliss on high;
But nothing to this hour, pray'r, tear, or sigh,
Whatever man could do, my hopes sustain:
And so indeed in justice should it be;
Able to stay, who went and fell, that he
Should prostrate, in his own despite, remain.
But lo! the tender arms
In which I trust are open to me still,
Tho' fears my bosom fill
Of others' fate, and my own heart alarms,
Which worldly feelings spur, haply, to utmost ill.

One thought thus parleys with my troubled mind
"What still do you desire, whence succour wait?
Ah! wherefore to this great
This guilty loss of time so madly blind?
Take up at length, wisely take up your part:
Tear ev'ry root of pleasure from your heart,
Which ne'er can make it blest,
Nor lets it freely play, nor calmly rest.
If long ago with tedium and disgust
You view'd the false and fugitive delights
With which its tools a treacherous world requites,
Why longer then repose in it your trust,
Whence peace and firmness are in exile thrust?
While life and vigour stay,

The bridle of your thoughts is in your pow'r:
Grasp, guide it while you may:
So clogg'd with doubt, so dangerous is delay,
The best for wise reform is still the present hour.

Well known to you what rapture still has been
Shed on your eyes by the dear sight of her,
Whom, for your peace it were
Better if she the light had never seen,
And you remember well (as well you ought)
Her image, when, as with one conquering bound
Your heart in prey she caught,
Where flame from other light no entrance found.
She fir'd it, and if that fallacious heat
Lasted long years expecting still one day,
Which for our safety came not, to repay,
It lifts you now to hope more blest and sweet,
Uplooking to that Heav'n around your head
Immortal, glorious spread;
If but a glance, a brief word, an old song
Had here such power to charm
Your eager passion, glad of its own harm,
How far 'twill then exceed if now the joy so strong."

Another thought the while, severe and sweet,
Laborious yet delectable in scope,
Takes in my heart its seat,
Filling with glory, feeding it with hope:
Till bent alone on bright and deathless fame,
It feels not when I freeze, or burn in flame,
When I am pale or ill,
And if I crush it rises stronger still.
This, from my helpless cradle, day by day,
Has strengthen'd with my strength, grown with my growth,
Till haply now one tomb must cover both:
When from the flesh the soul has past away
No more this passion comrades it as here:

For fame—if after death,
 Learning speak aught of me—is but a breath,
 Wherefore because I fear
 Hopes to indulge which the next hour may chase,
 I would old error leave and the one truth embrace.

But the third wish which fills and fires my heart
 O'ershadows all the rest which near it spring:
 Time too dispels a part,
 While but for her, self-reckless grown, I sing.
 And then the rare light of those beauteous eyes,
 Sweetly before whose gentle heat I melt,
 As a fine curb is felt,
 To combat which avails not wit or force;
 What boots it, trammel'd by such adverse ties,
 If still between the rocks must lie her course,
 To trim my little bark to new emprise?
 Ah! wilt thou never, Lord, who yet dost keep
 Me safe and free from common chains which bind
 In different modes mankind,
 Deign also from my brow this shame to sweep?
 For, as one sunk in sleep,
 Methinks Death ever present to my sight,
 Yet when I would resist I have no arms to fight.

Full well I see my state, in naught deceiv'd
 By truth ill known, but rather forc'd by Love
 Who leaves not him to move
 In honour, who too much his grace believ'd:
 For o'er my heart from time to time I feel
 A subtle scorn, a lively anguish steal,
 Whence ev'ry hidden thought,
 Where all may see, upon my brow is writ.
 For with such faith on mortal things to dote,
 As unto God alone is just and fit,
 Disgraces worst the prize who covets most:
 Should reason, amid things of sense, be lost,

This loudly calls her to the proper track:
But, when she would obey
And home return, ill habits keep her back,
And to my view portray
Her who was only born my death to be,
Too lovely in herself, too lov'd, alas! by me.

I neither know, to me what term of life
Heav'n destin'd when on earth I came at first
To suffer this sharp strife,
'Gainst my own peace which I myself have nurst,
Nor can I, for the veil my body throws,
Yet see the time when my sad life may close.
I feel my frame begin
To fail, and vary each desire within:
And now that I believe my parting day
Is near at hand, or else not distant lies,
Like one whom losses wary make and wise,
I travel back in thought, where first the way,
The right hand way I left, to peace which led.
While thro' me shame and grief,
Recalling the vain past on this side spread,
On that brings no relief
Passion, whose strength I now, from habit, feel,
So great that it would dare with death itself to deal.

Song! I am here, my heart the while more cold
With fear than frozen snow,
Feels in its certain core death's coming blow;
For thus, in weak self-communing, has roll'd
Of my vain life the better portion by:
Worse burden surely ne'er
Tried mortal man than that which now I bear;
Tho' Death be seated nigh,
For future life still seeking counsels new,
I know and love the good, yet ah! the worse pursue.

SONNET CCXXV.

He extols the virtue of Laura.

LAUREL ! victorious and triumphal tree,
 Which Poets, Emperors are proud to wear,
 How much of joy, of pain, by turns to bear
 In this my brief life has been caused by thee ?
 True Lady ! who in nought canst value see
 Except in virtue, still thy single care ;
 Thou fearest not of love the shaft or snare,
 From other lures kept by thy wisdom free.
 Pearls, rubies, gold, nobility of birth,
 All that of man is elsewhere dearly priz'd,
 Vile burthens, are alike by thee despis'd :
 Nor beauty pleases, peerless tho' on earth,
 Save as it aids, adorns the lovely shrine
 Which treasures well such chastity divine.

SONNET CCXXVI.

Laura is so severe to him, that he would die did he not hope to gain her pity.

HARD heart and cold, a stern will past belief
 In angel form of gentle sweet allure,
 If thus her practis'd rigour long endure
 O'er me her triumph will be poor and brief.
 For when or spring, or die flow'r, herb and leaf,
 When day is brightest, night when most obscure,
 Always I weep. Great cause from Fortune sure,
 From Love and Laura have I for my grief.
 I live in hope alone, rememb'ring still
 How by long fall of small drops I have seen
 Marble and solid stone that worn have been.
 No heart there is so hard, so cold no will,
 By true tears, fervent pray'rs and faithful love
 That will not deign at length to melt and move.

SONNET CCXXVII.

He laments his absence from Laura and Colonna, the two only objects of his affection.

MY Lord and friend! thoughts, wishes, all inclin'd
My heart to visit one so dear to me,
But Fortune—can she ever worse decree?
Held me in hand, misled, or kept behind.
Since then the dear desire Love taught my mind
But leads me to a death I did not see,
And while my twin lights, wheresoe'er I be
Are still denied, by day and night I've pin'd.
Affection for my Lord, my Lady's love,
The bonds have been wherewith in torments long
I have been bound, which round myself I wove.
A Laurel green, a Column fair and strong,
This for three lustres, that for three years more
In my fond breast, nor wish'd it free, I bore.

AFTER THE DEATH OF LAURA.

SONNET I.

On the news of the death of Laura.

ALAS! for the sweet look, the lovely face,
The port where majesty and grace combin'd,
The speech which, captivating ev'ry mind,
Humbled the haughty and made brave the base:
Alas! for the dear smile, to which I trace
My death, sole good I e'er can hope to find;
O noble soul, if earlier to mankind
Descended, worthy the world's throne to grace!
Needs must I ever burn, and breathe in you,
For yours alone I was, of you bereft,
No other sorrow now can vex me more.
What hopes and wishes in my bosom grew
My life's best pleasure when I lately left,
But ah! the winds away your kind words bore.

CANZONE I.

He asks counsel of Love, whether he should follow Laura, or still bear to live.

How I should act, thy counsel, Love, impart;
The time for death seems good:
Here have I tarried longer than I would;
LAURA is dead and in her tomb my heart.
Right gladly there to be,
Would I life's evil pilgrimage conclude:
For her on earth to see
I may not hope, and irksome 'tis to wait,
Since ev'ry joy, which fate
Gave me, is chang'd to grief, now she is gone,
And from my desolate life all its old sweetness flown!

Thou, Love! canst feel: I, therefore, mourn with thee
How heavy-hard the blow,
That my woes grieve thee and depress, I know
Ev'n as our own; for on one rock have we
Shatter'd our trusting bark,
Whose guiding light grew in that instant dark.
What words can fitly show
The sorrow and despair on me thus hurl'd?
Ah! blind ungrateful world,
Great cause indeed hast thou with me to mourn,
Thy richest treasure too with her away is torn!

Fallen is thy pride, yet wakes in thee no care;
While still she dwelt below,
Unworthy wert thou so much grace to know,
Or of her saintly feet the trace to bear;
For thing so sweet and fair
Should with its presence bless alone the skies.
I, lost in her my all
(Nor mortal life, nor proper weal who prize),
Her still with tears recal;

This of so many hopes the last remains ;
Sole stay which yet on earth my joyless life sustains.

Ah me! that lovely face is now but dust,
Which here to us made known
The blessings which, in heaven, reward the just;
Her viewless form to Paradise has flown,
From the gross veil set free,
Whose shadow o'er her flow'r of life was thrown,
Which yet once more must be
Put on, thence never to be doff'd again,
When, cleans'd from ev'ry stain,
As to immortal mortal beauties yield,
So, purer and more fair, 'twill be to us reveal'd.

With grace most rare, in brightest beauty rife,
She rises to my sight,
Where most she knows her presence will delight:
This is one pillar of my tottering life,
The other her dear name,
So sweet to my sad heart, so voic'd by fame;
But, calling to my mind,
How died my liveliest hopes, e'en when to me
They seem'd to flow'r most kind,
Well know'st thou, Love, what then my grief, and she
Who dwells on high, with truth, I trust too deigns to see.

Ye sister fair, who knew her charms and worth,
Her life angelical,
And her demeanour heavenly on earth;
Rather for me than her your tears let fall:
She to full rest has gone,
While, singly, I am left to struggle on.
But if aught long impedes
My progress in the path to her which leads,
What love suggests alone
Keeps still unbroken life's unwelcome band,
For, reasoning in this guise, he thus restrains my hand.

"The master grief transporting thee control,
 Lest, by blind passion led
 The heaven be lost to which aspires thy soul;
 There still she lives who seems to others dead:
 And, at her fair remains
 Smiling herself, she sighs alone for thee,
 Prays that her fame, now spread
 Thro' many a clime by thy devoted strains,
 Extinct may never be,
 But that, for her, thy song may flow more clear,
 If ever to thy love her eyes were sweet and dear."

Flee the calm green retreat!
 Approach not thou where mirth and music meet,
 My Song, ah! rather my lament,
 Ill fits it thee 'mid the gay crowd to go,
 A sorrowing widow wrapt in darksome weeds of woe!

SONNET II.

He bewails his double loss in the deaths of Laura and of Colonna.

FALL'N is the Laurel green, the Column high,
 Under whose shade my weary thought reclin'd;
 Ne'er can I hope what I have lost to find,
 From north to south, 'neath home or Indian sky.
 My double treasure Death has snatcht away,
 Which made me proudly tread and joyful live,
 Which nor wide lands, nor pow'r of gold can give,
 Nor oriental gems, nor kingly sway.
 If such of destiny the stern decree,
 For me what more remains? the bursting heart,
 The downcast mien bedew'd with ceaseless tears.
 Our life, which seems at first so fair to be,
 Is but a shade; in one brief day depart
 The slow-won profits of laborious years.

CANZONE II.

Unless Love can restore her to life, he will never again be his slave.

If thou wouldst have me, Love, thy slave again,
One other proof, miraculous and new,
Must yet be wrought by you,
Ere, conquer'd, I resume my ancient chain.
Lift my dear love from earth which hides her now,
For whose sad loss thus beggar'd I remain;
Once more with warmth endow
That wise chaste heart where wont my life to dwell;
And if, as some divine, thy influence so,
From highest Heaven unto the depths of Hell,
Prevail in sooth—for what its scope below,
'Mid us of common race,
Methinks each gentle breast may answer well—
Rob Death of his late triumph, and replace
Thy conquering ensign in her lovely face!

Relume on that fair brow the living light,
Which was my honour'd guide, and the sweet flame,
Tho' spent, which still the same
Kindles me now as when it burn'd most bright;
For thirsty hind with such desire did ne'er
Long for green pastures or the crystal brook,
As I for the dear look,
Whence I have borne so much, and—if aright
I read myself and passion—more must bear:
This makes me to one theme my thoughts thus bind,
An aimless wanderer where is pathway none,
With weak and wearied mind
Pursuing hopes which never can be won.
Hence to thy summons answer I disdain,
Thine is no pow'r beyond thy proper reign.

Give me again that gentle voice to hear,
As in my heart are heard its echoes still,
Which had in song the skill
Hate to disarm, rage soften, sorrow cheer,
To tranquillise each tempest of the mind,
And from dark lowering clouds to keep it clear;
Which sweetly then refin'd
And rais'd my verse where now it may not soar.
And, with desire that hope may equal vie,
Since now my mind is wak'd in strength, restore
Their proper business to my ear and eye,
Awaiting which life must
All tasteless be and harder than to die.
Vainly with me to your old pow'r you trust,
While my first love is shrouded still in dust.

Give her dear glance again to bless my sight,
Which, as the sun on snow, beam'd still for me;
Open each window bright
Where pass'd my heart whence no return can be;
Resume thy golden shafts, prepare thy bow,
And let me once more drink with old delight
Of that dear voice the sound,
Whence what love is I first was taught to know.
And, for the lures, which still I covet so,
Were rifest, richest there my soul that bound,
Waken to life her tongue, and on the breeze
Let her light silken hair,
Loosen'd by love's own fingers, float at ease,
Do this, and I thy willing yoke will bear,
Else thy hope faileth my free will to snare.

O never my gone heart those links of gold,
Artlessly negligent, or curl'd with grace,
Nor her enchanting face,

Sweetly severe, can captive cease to hold;
These, night and day, the amorous wish in me
Kept, more than laurel or than myrtle, green,
When, doff'd or donn'd, we see
Of fields the grass, of woods their leafy screen.
And since that Death so haughty stands and stern,
The bond now broken whence I fear'd to flee,
Nor thine the art, howe'er the world may turn,
To bind anew the chain,
What boots it, Love, old arts to try again?
Their day is pass'd: thy pow'r, since lost the arms
Which were my terror once, no longer harms.

Thy arms were then her eyes, unrivall'd, whence
Live darts were freely shot of viewless flame;
No help from reason came,
For against Heaven avails not man's defence:
Thought, Silence, Feeling, Gaiety, Wit, Sense,
Modest demeanour, affable discourse,
In words of sweetest force
Whence every grosser nature gentle grew,
That angel air, humble to all and kind,
Whose praise, it needs not mine, from all we find,
Stood she, or sate, a grace which often threw
Doubt on the gazer's mind
To which the meed of highest praise was due—
O'er hardest hearts thy victory was sure,
With arms like these, which lost I am secure.

The minds which Heaven abandons to thy reign,
Haply are bound in many times and ways,
But mine one only chain,
Its wisdom shielding me from more, obeys;
Yet freedom brings no joy, tho' that be burst.
Rather I mournful ask, "Sweet pilgrim mine,

Alas! what doom divine
 Me earliest bound to life yet frees thee first:
 God, who has snatch'd thee from the world so soon,
 Only to kindle our desires, the boon
 Of virtue, so complete and lofty, gave.
 Now, Love, I may deride
 Thy future wounds, nor fear to be thy slave;
 In vain thy bow is bent, its bolts fall wide,
 When clos'd her brilliant eyes their virtue died."

Death from thy ev'ry law my heart has freed;
 She who my Lady was is passed on high,
 Leaving me free to count dull hours drag by,
 To solitude and sorrow still decreed.

SONNET III.

On the death of another Lady.

THE burning toil, wherein my heart was ta'en
 While twenty years and one roll'd o'er my head,
 Death loos'd: yet live I 'neath a weight like lead;
 Sure death by grief can never chance again!
 But Love, yet loath to free me from his chain,
 Another snare among the fine grass spread,
 And with new fuel so the old fire fed,
 My safety thence was only with great pain.
 From my first woes had no experience been,
 This second flame had caught, consum'd me then,
 And sooner that my wood no more was green.
 Death from such thrall has freed me once agen,
 Broken the bond and crush'd the smould'ring fire,
 Baffled by which man's force and wit retire.

SONNET IV.

Since the death of Laura, past, present and future are alike but torment and pain
to him.

LIFE hurries on, nor will a moment stay;
And Death with giant pace stalks on behind;
Things past and present prey upon my mind,
And the dark future fills me with dismay.
Memory and expectation so in me
Govern by turns, that, truly, but that fear
Of God, not love of self detains me here,
Long, long had I from the fierce strife been free.
If aught of joy my sad heart ever knew,
'Tis present to me now, while tempests dark
Still low'r on high my weary course to bar;
For near the port where bliss at last I view,
Tho' worn my pilot, rent my sails and bark,
And quench'd the light which was my guiding star.

SONNET V.

He encourages his soul to lift itself to God, and to abandon the vanities of earth.

How act, or think, world-weary soul and sad?
Why on the time which never can return
Still look with vain repining? wherefore add
Fuel unto the flame wherein you burn?
The lovely looks, the conversation sweet,
Prais'd one by one in your devoted strain,
Now soar above us, and the hope to meet
Them here on earth is tardy all and vain.
Alas then! from the fatal subject cease,
Pursue no more the vague fallacious thought,
But take the sure firm path that leads to peace.
Seek we in heav'n, since joy on earth is nought;
Ill was such loveliness to us display'd,
In life or death which still our mis'ry made.

SONNET VI.

He compares himself to a besieged city, and accuses his own heart of treason.

O TYRANT thoughts, vouchsafe me some repose!
Sufficeth not that Love, and Death, and Fate,
Make war all round me to my very gate,
But I must in me armed hosts enclose?
And thou my heart, to me alone that shows
Disloyal still, what cruel guides of late
In thee find shelter, now the chosen mate
Of my most mischievous and bitter foes?
Love his most secret embassies in thee,
In thee her worst results hard Fate explains
And Death the mem'ry of that blow, to me
Which shatters all that yet of hope remains;
In thee vague thoughts themselves with error arm,
And thee alone I blame for all my harm.

SONNET VII.

He endeavours to find peace in the thought that she is in Heaven.

EYES! our one sun is darken'd in life's sky,
Or, haply, heav'n-ascended, there to shine;
Yet shall we see her, where she waits, on high,
And almost seems at our delay to pine.
Ears! her sweet accents we have lost, that vie
With angels' now, in feeling tones and fine;
Feet! not as erst, but vainly now ye try
Your pow'rs to reach her in yon home divine.
Then wherefore keep me in this constant strife?
Not mine the hand which robb'd you of the bliss,
Of seeing, hearing, having her in life.
The blame is Death's alone, the praise be His
Who binds, unbinds, opens and shuts at will,
And after sorrow leaves us happy still.

SONNET VIII.

After the loss of Laura—how can he, why should he live?

SINCE her calm angel face, long beauty's fane,
 My beggar'd soul by this brief parting throws
 In darkest horrors and in deepest woes,
 I seek by uttering to allay my pain.
 Certes, just sorrow leads me to complain:
 This she, who is its cause, and Love too shows;
 No other remedy my poor heart knows
 Against the troubles that in life obtain.
 Death! thou hast snatch'd her hence with hand unkind,
 And thou, glad Earth! that fair and kindly face
 Now hidest from me in thy close embrace;
 Why leave me here, disconsolate and blind,
 Since she who of mine eyes the light has been,
 Sweet, loving, bright, no more with me is seen?

SONNET IX.

He describes his sad state.

IF Love to give new counsel still delay,
 My life must change to other modes than these;
 My troubled spirit grief and terror freeze,
 And flourishes desire while hopes decay.
 Thus grows my life in all, by night and day,
 Despondent, and dismay'd, and ill at ease,
 Harass'd and helmless on tempestuous seas,
 With no sure escort on a doubtful way.
 Her path a sick imagination guides,
 Its true light underneath—ah no! on high
 Whence on my heart she beams more bright than aye,
 Not on mine eyes; from them a dark veil hides
 Those lovely orbs, and makes me, ere life's span
 Is measured half, an old and broken man.

SONNET X.

He desires to die.

E'EN in youth's fairest flow'r, when Love's dear sway
 Is wont with strongest pow'r our hearts to bind,
 Leaving on earth her fleshly veil behind,
 My life, my Laura past from me away;
 Living, and fair, and free from our vile clay,
 From Heav'n she rules supreme my willing mind:
 Alas! why left me in this mortal rind
 That first of peace, of sin that latest day?
 As my fond thoughts her heav'nward path pursue,
 So may my soul, glad, light, and ready be,
 To follow her, and thus from troubles flee.
 Whate'er delays me, as worst loss I rue:
 Time makes me to myself but heavier grow:
 Death had been sweet to-day three years ago!

SONNET XI.

He hears her very voice.

WHETHER, from some fresh bank with flowrets spread,
 I hear the birds' low plaint, or the green trees
 Whispering gently in the summer breeze,
 Or clear stream murmuring o'er its pebbly bed,
 Pensive with love, alone I sit and muse;
 I see, hear, know but her whom kind Heav'n gave
 Awhile to bless us; even to the grave
 Where cold she sleeps fond memory pursues.
 Far off and fondly, answ'ring to my sighs,
Why thus in vain consume thy youth, she says,
Why to thy swoln eye does the sad tear rise?
O mourn no more for me! through death my days
Eternal grew: mine eyes, when clos'd in night
The vain world deem'd them, saw eternal light.

SONNET XII.

Vaucluse.

NOWHERE before could I so well have seen
 Her whom my soul most craves since lost to view;
 Nowhere in so great freedom could have been
 Breathing my amorous lays 'neath skies so blue;
 Never with depths of shade so calm and green
 A valley found for lover's sigh more true;
 Methinks a spot so lovely and serene
 Love not in Cyprus nor in Gnidus knew.
 All breathes one spell, all prompts and prays that I
 Like them should love—the clear sky, the calm hour,
 Winds, waters, birds, the green bough, the gay flow'r—
 But thou belov'd, who call'st me from on high,
 By the sad memory of thine early fate,
 Pray that I hold the world and these sweet snares in
 hate.

SONNET XIII.

The force of imagination in solitude.

How often to my own belov'd retreat,
 From man, and haply from myself I fly,
 Earth and my bosom bathing with fond eye,
 Vexing with sighs the airs that on me beat;
 How oft, alone, with weak distrust replete,
 The shadowy and thick woods I wander by,
 Seeking in thought the dear one, snatcht on high
 By Death, whom vainly I for her intreat.
 Now as a Nymph, or Naiad is she seen,
 Fair issuing from Sorga's clearest deeps,
 Or pensive seated by its margin green;
 Now o'er the fresh and flow'ry sward she sweeps,
 Light as in life her form, as bright her mien,
 And o'er me pitying bends, and for me gently weeps.

SONNET XIV.

He thanks her that from time to time she returns to console him with her presence.

BLEST Spirit! who so oft in pity here
 Descendest to console my desolate nights,
 With star-like eyes, by death unquench'd and clear,
 Which immortality now better lights;
 That still thou deign'st my gloomy life to cheer
 With thy sweet sight a grateful joy excites,
 For thus thy beauty, ever new and near,
 In each old haunt my faithful love requites;
 Those haunts, thine own, in hope and pride where late
 Of thee I sang, where now I mourn for thee,
 For thee—Ah no! but for my own hard fate.
 Yet 'mid my many woes one balm I see,
 That I, in these thy visitings below,
 From gait, speech, mien, and dress, thy presence feel
 and know.

SONNET XV.

He reproaches Death; the shade of Laura consoles him.

DEATH! on that fairest face thy livid stain
 Thou hast imprest, and quench'd the brightest eyes,
 That spirit with all virtues warm and wise,
 Loos'd from earth's loveliest and dearest chain;
 At once my ev'ry blessing hast thou ta'en,
 Silenc'd the sweetest accents that the skies
 E'er heard, and left me to perpetual sighs,
 Condemn'd, in all I see and hear, to pain.
 My Lady, to console my passionate grief,
 Well turns where most her sympathy may bless,
 Nor find I else in this dark life relief:
 If how she speaks and shines I could express,
 Instant of conq'ring love the flame would shoot
 Thro' ev'ry heart, alike of man and brute.

SONNET XVI.

He prides himself on keeping her still in mind, though he derives small comfort from the thought.

So brief the time, so fugitive the thought
 Which Laura yields to me, tho' dead, again,
 Small medicine give they to my giant pain;
 Still, as I look on her, afflicts me nought.
 Love, on the rack who holds me as he brought,
 Fears when he sees her thus my soul retain,
 Where still the seraph face and sweet voice reign,
 Which first his tyranny and triumph wrought.
 As rules a mistress in her home of right,
 From my dark heavy heart her serene brow
 Dispels each anxious thought and omen drear.
 My soul which bears but ill such dazzling light,
 Says with a sigh: *O blessed day! when thou
 Didst ope with those dear eyes thy passage here!*

SONNET XVII.

She descends from Heaven to counsel him to virtue, and to raise his soul to God.

NE'ER did fond mother to her darling child,
 Nor loving lady to her honour'd lord,
 With sighs so many, in such accents mild,
 Counsel so sage, in doubt or fear, afford,
 As from her high eternal seat above,
 She, who beholding my hard exile here,
 Turns to me ever with her own old love,
 Her meek eye gemm'd by pity's purest tear.
 As anxious parent now, and now as wife
 Who burns with a chaste flame, her counsels show
 What points 'twere meet to seek or shun below;
 Telling the various ills of human life,
 She prays me not to tarry long behind,
 And only when she speaks, I peace or comfort find.

SONNET XVIII.

She returns in pity to comfort him with her advice, to which he cannot but yield.

If that soft breath of sighs, which, from above,
 I hear of her so long my lady here,
 Who, now in Heav'n, yet seems, as of our sphere,
 To breathe, and move, to feel, and live, and love,
 I could but paint, my passionate verse should move
 Warmest desires; so jealous, yet so dear
 O'er me she bends and breathes, without a fear
 That on the way I tire, or turn, or rove.
 She points the path on high: and I who know
 Her chaste anxiety and earnest pray'r,
 In whispers sweet, affectionate, and low,
 Train, at her will, my acts and wishes there:
 And find such sweetness in her words alone
 As with their pow'r should melt the hardest stone.

SONNET XIX.

On the death of his friend Sennuccio.

SENNUCCIO mine! I yet myself console,
 Tho' thou hast left me, mournful and alone,
 For eagerly to Heav'n thy spirit has flown,
 Free from the flesh which did so late enrol;
 Thence, at one view, commands it either pole,
 The planets and their wondrous courses known,
 And human sight how brief and doubtful shown;
 Thus with thy bliss my sorrow I control.
 One favour—in the third of those bright spheres,
 Guido, and Dante, Cino too salute
 With Franceschin and all that tuneful train,
 And tell my Lady how I live, in tears,
 (Savage and lonely as some forest brute)
 Her sweet face and fair works when Mem'ry brings again.

SONNET XX.

Vaucluse has become to him a scene of pain.

HERE ev'ry scene has heard my often sigh,
 Beholding from rude hills the pleasant plain
 Where she was born who held my heart in chain.
 As in life's flow'r so when its fruit was nigh,
 Her sudden parting as she past on high
 Left my poor life in such a desp'rate train
 That my worn eyes, far-seeking her in vain,
 Leave here no single spot from sorrow dry.
 There's not a shrub, nor stone, on these cold mounts,
 Nor bough, nor leaf in all these banks around,
 Nor in these vales a flow'r, or blade of green,
 Nor falls a drop of water from these founts,
 Nor in these woods are beasts so savage found
 Which know not well how sharp my pains have been.

SONNET XXI.

He acknowledges the prudence of her past coldness to him.

MY noble flame—more fair than fairest are
 Whom kind Heav'n here has e'er in favour shown—
 Before her time, alas for me! has flown
 To her celestial home and parent star.
 I seem but now to wake; wherein a bar
 She plac'd on passion 'twas for good alone,
 As with a gentle coldness, all her own,
 She wag'd with my hot wishes virtuous war.
 My thanks on her for such wise care I press,
 That with her lovely face and sweet disdain
 She check'd my love and taught me peace to gain.
 O graceful artifice! deserv'd success!
 I with my fond verse, with her bright eyes she,
 Glory in her, she virtue got in me.

SONNET XXII.

He thanks and blesses Laura for her virtue.

How goes the world! now please me and delight
 What most displeas'd me: now I see and feel
 My trials were vouchsaf'd me for my weal,
 That peace eternal should brief war requite.
 O hopes and wishes, ever fond and slight,
 In lovers most, which oft'ner harm than heal!
 Worse had she yielded to my warm appeal
 Whom Heav'n has welcom'd from the grave's dark
 night.
 But blind love and my dull mind so misled,
 I sought to trespass even by main force
 Where to have won my precious soul were dead.
 Blessed be she who shap'd mine erring course
 To better port, by turns who curb'd and lur'd
 My bold and passionate will where safety was secur'd.

SONNET XXIII.

A comparison.

WHEN in the kindling Heav'n, with roseate brow
 And golden hair, Aurora freshly glows,
 Love o'er my pale cheek his sad liv'ry throws,
 And I say sighing: *There is Laura now*.
 O blest Tithonus! well is known to thee
 The hour which shall thy treasure bring again;
 But not to me, alas! such hopes remain,
 Thro' death alone can I my lost love see;
 Thy partings seem to me less hard to bear,
 For still the friendly night to thee brings back
 Her whose fond love ne'er scorns thy silver hair;
 More sad my nights the while, my days more black
 Are made by her, who bore away, unkind,
 My ev'ry thought and left me but her name behind.

SONNET XXIV.

He must cease speaking of graces and beauties which are no more.

THE eyes my fond song made so widely known,
 The arms, the hands, the feet, that face so fair
 Which from myself did so my senses tear,
 That in the world I seem'd to walk alone:
 The crispy locks of pure translucent gold,
 The lightning of that angel smile, which here
 Made our dull earth a paradise appear,
 Are now but dust, inanimate, and cold;
 And still I live: O grief! O shame to me!
 Live, tho' the light is sunk, which while it burn'd
 Safe led my frail bark o'er life's stormy tide.
 But silent now my amorous strain must be;
 The source of genius and of song is dried,
 And my harp also is to mourning turn'd.

SONNET XXV.

He at last admits the fame which has accrued to him from his verses.

HAD I e'er thought that to the world so dear
 The echo of my sighs would be in rhyme,
 I would have made them in my sorrow's prime
 Rarer in style, in number more appear.
 Since she is dead my muse who prompted here,
 First in my thoughts and feelings at all time,
 All pow'r is lost of tender or sublime
 My rough dark verse to render soft and clear.
 And certes, my sole study and desire
 Was but—I knew not how—in those long years
 To unburthen my sad heart, not fame acquire.
 I wept, but wish'd no honour in my tears.
 Fain would I now taste joy; but that high fair,
 Silent and weary, calls me to her there.

SONNET XXVI.

The excess of his sorrow, and the sad destiny of Man.

SHE stood within my heart warm, young, alone,
 As in a humble home a lady bright;
 By her last flight not merely am I grown
 Mortal, but dead, and she an angel quite.
 A soul whence ev'ry bliss and hope is flown,
 Love shorn and naked of its own glad light,
 Might melt with pity e'en a heart of stone:
 But none there is to tell their grief or write;
 These plead within, where deaf is ev'ry ear
 Except mine own, whose pow'r its griefs so mar
 That nought is left me save to suffer here.
 Verily we but dust and shadows are!
 Verily blind and evil is our will!
 Verily human hopes deceive us still!

SONNET XXVII.

He comforts himself with the hope that she hears him.

MY thoughts in fair alliance and array
 Hold converse on the theme which most endears:
 Pity approaches and repents delay:
 E'en now she speaks of us, or hopes, or fears.
 Since the last day, the terrible hour when Fate
 This present life of her fair being reft
 From Heav'n she sees, and hears, and feels our state:
 No other hope than this to me is left.
 O fairest miracle! most fortunate mind!
 O unexampled beauty, stately, rare!
 Whence lent too late, too soon, alas! rejoin'd.
 Hers is the crown and palm of good deeds there,
 Who to the world so eminent and clear
 Made her great virtue and my passion here.

SONNET XXVIII.

He glories in his love.

I NOW excuse myself who wont to blame,
 Nay more I prize and even hold me dear,
 For this fair prison, this sweet-bitter shame
 Which I have borne conceal'd so many a year.
 O envious Fates! that rare and golden frame
 Rudely ye broke, where lightly twin'd and clear,
 Yarn of my bonds, the threads of world-wide fame
 Which lovely 'gainst his wont made death appear.
 For not a soul was ever in its days
 Of joy, of liberty, of life so fond,
 That would not change for her its natural ways,
 Preferring thus to suffer and despond,
 Thán, fed by hope, to sing in others' praise,
 Content to die, or live in such a bond.

SONNET XXIX.

The union of Beauty and of Virtue: their disappearance from the world.

Two mortal foes in one fair breast combin'd,
 Beauty and Virtue, in such peace allied
 That ne'er rebellion ruffled that pure mind,
 But in rare union dwelt they side by side;
 By death they now are shatter'd and disjoin'd;
 One is in Heav'n, its glory and its pride,
 One under earth, her brilliant eyes now blind,
 Whence stings of love once issued far and wide.
 That winning air, that rare discourse and meek,
 Surely from heav'n inspir'd, that gentle glance
 Which wounded my poor heart, and wins it still,
 Are gone; if I am slow her road to seek
 I hope her fair and graceful name perchance
 To consecrate with this worn weary quill.

SONNET XXX.

Remembering the past, he awakes and feels his present wretched state.

WHEN I look back upon the many years
 Which in their flight my best thoughts have entomb'd,
 And spent the fire, that, spite her ice, consum'd,
 And finish'd the repose so full of tears,
 Broken the faith which Love's young dream endears,
 And the two parts of all my blessing doom'd,
 This low in earth, while heav'n has that resum'd,
 And lost the guerdon of my pains and fears,
 I wake, and feel me to the bitter wind
 So bare, I envy the worst lot I see;
 Self-terror and heart-grief on me so wait.
 O Death, O Fate, O Fortune, Stars unkind!
 O day for ever dark and drear to me!
 How have ye sunk me in this abject state.

SONNET XXXI.

He enumerates and eulogises the graces of Laura.

WHERE is that face whose slightest look could wind
 My fond heart where it would, now here, now there?
 Where the twin stars which from that forehead fair,
 Shone on my life's dim course with influence kind?
 Where is that talent, prudence, virtue join'd?
 That courteous, clear, mild, modest eloquence where?
 And where, all met in her, the graces rare
 Which so long rul'd at will my captive mind?
 Where is the gentle shade of that sweet mien,
 Which calm'd at once my aching spirit's strife,
 And smooth'd my brow where every thought was seen?
 Ah! where is she who held in hand my life?
 How great the loss, O wretched world, to thee!
 Mine too how great whose tears must ceaseless be!

SONNET XXXII.

He envies Earth, Heaven and Death their possession of his treasure.

WHAT envy do I bear thee, covetous Earth
 Which holdest her whom now I cannot see,
 The look of whose fair face so hid from me
 To my sole peace in life's long war gave birth!
 And what of Heav'n, whose full and clasping girth
 Her spirit, from its lovely members free,
 Has gather'd to itself so greedily,
 Yet slow to others opens its rare worth!
 What envy of those spirits blest, who now
 Her sainted and sweet company enjoy,
 Which still I sought with such desire intense!
 What too of cruel Death! Grim tyrant! thou,
 In taking hers who didst my life destroy,
 Reignest in her bright eyes, nor call'st me hence.

SONNET XXXIII.

He revisits Vaucluse.

VALLEY! of my lamentings long the scene,
 Stream! with its tears which oft my sorrow feeds,
 And Ye! whom flood and field and forest breeds,
 'Neath crystal depths or by these banks of green:
 Air! with mine oft sighs glowing and serene,
 Sweet path! that to such bitter issue leads,
 Hill once so dear! where, tho' my bosom bleeds,
 Love guides me now as long his wont had been.
 Your own old forms I well recal in you,
 Not in myself alas! whose joy's brief reign
 Has clos'd in infinite and lifelong woe.
 Where then I view'd her I return to view,
 Whence her pure spirit soar'd to Heav'n again,
 Leaving her mortal form alone below.

SONNET XXXIV.

He soars in imagination to heaven, sees and hears Laura there, and is blessed.

LATE my rapt fancy took its eager flight,
 Where she I seek on earth, but cannot find,
 Sits high in heav'n amidst the saints enshrined;
 More beautiful, less proud she met my sight,
 And took my hand. *If prompts my spirit right,*
Yet shalt thou here, she said, with me be join'd,
For I am she for whom thy fond heart pined,
Whose brief day vanish'd ere it yet was night:
Here is my bliss all human thought above;
For thee and the fair shroud which late embrac'd
This form so dear to thee, I wait alone.
 —Why did she cease? O why that hand remove?
 For at those gentle sounds, that touch so chaste,
 Seem'd as my soul the joys of heav'n had won.

SONNET XXXV.

He vents his sorrow to all who witnessed his former felicity.

LOVE, who with me in happier hours hast stood
 On these lone shores to pensive thought so dear,
 And of our old account the debt to clear,
 Sweet converse held'st with me and with the flood!
 Ye flow'rs, leaves, herbs, grots, streams and gentle gales!
 Cool shades, calm vales, high hills and smiling plains!
 My only shelter from the toil and pains
 Of love, and from the woe which life assails!
 Ye Nymphs, the bosky dells who sportive tread!
 And Naiads, ye who featly dwell below
 The crystal streams by freshest verdure fed!
 My days that were so clear, as dark now grow
 As death which makes them so. E'en thus on earth
 Each has his fate assign'd him from his birth.

SONNET XXXVI.

If Laura were still alive, he would know how to praise her more worthily.

WHILST in my heart Love's brood their havoc wrought,
 Whilst with his fierce flame yet my bosom burn'd,
 Where'er the footsteps of my proud fair turn'd,
 O'er distant desert hills her trace I sought.
 Bravely in song I then with sorrow fought
 For love, for her who still so coldly spurn'd;
 But in that state nor verse nor fancy learn'd
 Fitly to shape my green and feeble thought.
 That fire is cold, beneath a little stone:
 But if, advancing ever with the time,
 To ripe age, as in others, it had grown,
 Arm'd with the weapon, I now sheathe, of rhyme,
 My happier skill the very rocks had felt
 Of force to break them, or with sweetness melt.

SONNET XXXVII.

He prays Laura to look down upon him from Heaven.

BRIGHT Spirit! from the beauteous bondage freed,
 Whose match ne'er dwelt on earth, so fair and pure,
 Look down from heav'n upon my life obscure,
 Where frequent sorrows former joys succeed.
 No more thy faith those old ill doubts impede
 Which erst to me, disdainful or demure,
 Made thy dear sight: of angel bliss now sure,
 Turn here those soft eyes and mine anguish heed.
 Lo! by the great rock whence bright Sorga flows
 He, who its green banks paceth thus forlorn,
 Lives on your memory and his own heart-woes.
 Where stood thy dwelling, where our love was born,
 E'en such dear spots I counsel you to leave,
 That nothing here thy risen soul may grieve.

SONNET XXXVIII.

Love and He seek Laura, but find no traces of her except in the sky.

THAT sun, which ever signalled the right road,
 Where flash'd her own bright feet, to heav'n to fly,
 Returning to the Eternal Sun on high
 Has quench'd my light, and cast her earthly load;
 Thus, lone and weary, my oft steps have trode,
 As some wild animal, the sere woods by,
 Fleeing with heavy heart and downcast eye
 The world which since to me a blank has show'd.
 Still with fond search each well-known spot I pace
 Where once I saw her: Love, who grieves me so,
 My only guide, directs me where to go.
 I find her not: her ev'ry sainted trace
 Seeks, in bright realms above, her parent star
 From grisly Styx and black Avernus far.

SONNET XXXIX.

He confesses himself unworthy even to have looked upon her, and quite incapable of rightly praising her.

I THOUGHT me apt and firm of wing to rise
 (Not of myself but him who trains us all)
 In song, to numbers fitting the fair thrall
 Which Love once fasten'd and which Death unties.
 Slow now and frail, the task too sorely tries,
 As a great weight upon a sucker small:
Who leaps, I said, too high may midway fall:
Man ill accomplishes what Heav'n denies.
 So far the wing of Genius ne'er could fly—
 Poor style like mine and falt'ring tongue much less—
 As Nature rose, in that rare fabric, high.
 Love followed Nature with such full success
 In gracing her, no claim could I advance
 Even to look, and yet was blest by chance.

SONNET XL.

He attempts to paint her beauties, but dares not describe her virtues.

SHE, for whose sake fair Arno I resign,
 And for frank poverty court-affluence spurn,
 Has known to sour the precious sweets to turn
 On which I liv'd, for which I burn and pine.
 Tho' since, the vain attempt has oft been mine
 That future ages from my song should learn
 Her heav'nly beauties, and like me should burn,
 My poor verse fails her sweet face to define.
 The gifts, tho' all her own, which others share,
 Which were but stars her bright sky scatter'd o'er,
 Haply of these to sing e'en I might dare;
 But when to the diviner part I soar,
 To the dull world a brief and brilliant light,
 Courage and wit and art are baffled quite.

SONNET XLI.

Laura is a miracle, and therefore it is impossible for him to describe her excellences.

THE wonder, high and new, that, in our days,
 Dawn'd on the world yet would not there remain,
 Which Heav'n but show'd to us to snatch again
 Better to blazon its own starry ways;
 That to far times I her should paint and praise
 Love wills, who prompted first my passionate strain;
 But now wit, leisure, pen, page, ink in vain
 To the fond task a thousand times he sways.
 My slow rhymes struggle not to life the while;
 I feel it, and whoe'er to-day below,
 Or speak or write of love will prove it so.
 Who justly deems the truth beyond all style,
 Here silent let him muse, and sighing say,
 Blessed the eyes who saw her living day!

SONNET XLII.

The return of Spring, welcome to others, distresses him with the memory of his
great loss.

RETURNING zephyrs the sweet season bring,
 When flow'rs and verdure clothe again the vale;
 Now Procne's twitter, Philomela's wail
 Proclaim the welcome advent of fair Spring:
 The meadows smile, pure spread the skies above;
 Great Jove exults to see his child so fair;
 One genial spell pervades earth, sea and air;
 All that has breath bows to Almighty Love:
 To me, the while, return but heavier sighs
 Drawn from mine inmost heart by her who bore
 Its keys with her unto her native skies:
 Me flow'ring vales and sweet birds please no more,
 Nor gentle acts of ladies fair and good,
 For life a desert seems where wild beasts prowl for food.

SONNET XLIII.

The nightingale encourages him to sorrow.

YON nightingale—whose sweetly mournful strain,
 Wailing her rifled nest or absent mate,
 With music charms the sky and fills the plain
 With fond sad notes well tun'd to her lone state—
 Seems the long night to echo but my pain
 Recalling ever my sharp sorrow's weight;
 Yet I can only of myself complain,
 Who deem'd a Goddess could not yield to fate.
 How easy to deceive who feels secure!
 Who would have thought those eyes which wont to burn
 Bright as the sun could ever be obscure!
 Hence cruel fortune's will I plainly learn,
 That I should live and weep, and weeping know
 That nothing which delights lasts long below.

SONNET XLIV.

Nothing can comfort him except the desire to die, that he may again see her.

NOR glitt'ring stars which gem the sky serene,
 Nor gay barks bounding o'er the tranquil main,
 Nor deer bright glancing forest glades between,
 Nor arm'd knights pricking fearless o'er the plain,
 Nor the fresh news of happiness foreseen,
 Nor love to sing in high and polish'd strain,
 Nor by clear fountain nor on meadow green
 Where Beauty sits an honour'd place to gain :
 Nor can aught welcome to my heart e'er be,
 Which buried lies with her who was alone
 The mirror and the light of life to me,
 Which now so wearisome and sad is grown
 That death I pray, thro' strong desire to see
 Her whom 'twere better to have never known.

SONNET XLV.

He desires to be reunited to Laura, who has deprived him of all happiness, and taken away even his heart.

PAST is the time, alas! which ever brought
 E'en mid its flames my tortur'd soul relief;
 Past too is she for whom I wept and wrote
 Who here has left me but my pen and grief:
 Past the sweet seraph face, but ere she past
 Those dear eyes fix'd my heart, this heart once mine,
 Which fondly follow'd, faithful to the last,
 Her whose fair form did all its hopes enshrine.
 She bore it hence with her from earth to heaven,
 Where now she shines with deathless laurel crown'd,
 To her unconquer'd virtue justly given.
 Would that I were—this mortal veil unbound,
 Perforce which keeps me here—at endless rest,
 Beyond all sighs, among the spirits blest!

SONNET XLVI.

He recalls the fatal farewell.

MY mind, prophetic of near distress,
 Felt, where all else was bright, opprest and low,
 And on those lovely features linger'd so,
 As there, to make its future suff'ring less,
 Some help to find. By acts, words, mien and dress,
 By her new kindness touch'd with tender woe,
 I well might read, if one could all foreknow
 The last day this of all my happiness!
 What sweetness then, O wretched soul, was ours!
 How beam'd on me, as then I look'd my last
 Those eyes which never more to see was mine!
 Foredoom'd and fearful, in those parting hours,
 To them, as two sure friends, in keeping fast
 My full heart and fond thoughts did I consign!

SONNET XLVII.

When he might without suspicion have improved his acquaintance with Laura, she was snatched away.

ALL my green youth, my flow'r of life had past,
 And now I felt the flame grow cold apace,
 Which burn'd my heart, for I had reach'd the place
 Whence life declines to its sure end at last.
 My fair foe by degrees began to cast
 Old doubts aside, as fanciful and base,
 And rally, with pure virtue's playful grace,
 The bitter pains my peace which strove to blast.
 The time drew nigh without a blush or fear
 When Chastity mates Love; when long and late
 True lovers sit and talk, and look and hear:
 But Death, as jealous of my happy state,
 And budding hopes, my further bliss to let,
 An arm'd and hostile man himself in midway set.

SONNET XLVIII.

Were she still alive, he could freely sigh and speak with her.

'TWAS time at last from so long war to find
 Some peace or truce, and, haply, both were nigh,
 But Death their welcome feet has turn'd behind,
 Who levels all distinctions, low as high;
 And as a cloud dissolves before the wind,
 So she, who led me with her lustrous eye,
 Whom ever I pursue with faithful mind,
 Her fair life briefly ending, sought the sky.
 Had she but stay'd, as I grew chang'd and old
 Her tone had chang'd, and no distrust had been
 To parley with me on my cherish'd ill:
 With what frank sighs and fond I then had told
 My lifelong toils, which now from heav'n, I ween,
 She sees, and with me sympathises still.

SONNET XLIX.

He lost in one moment all the dear peace which should have have been the fruit
 of his love.

FROM life's long storm of trouble and of tears
 Love show'd a tranquil haven and fair end
 'Mid better thoughts which riper age attend,
 That vice lays bare and virtue clothes and cheers.
 She saw my true heart, free from doubts and fears,
 And its high faith which could no more offend;
 Ah! cruel Death, how quick wert thou to rend
 In so few hours the fruit of many years.
 A longer life the time had surely brought
 When in her chaste ear my full heart had laid
 The ancient burthen of its dearest thought.
 And she, perchance, might then have answer made,
 Forth-sighing some blest words, whilst white and few
 Our locks became, and wan our cheeks in hue.

SONNET L.

An allegory.

As a fair plant, uprooted by oft blows
 Of trenchant spade, or which the blast upheaves,
 Scatters on earth its green and lofty leaves,
 And its bare roots to the broad sunlight shows:
 Love such another for my object chose,
 Of whom for me the Muse a subject weaves,
 Who in my captur'd heart her home achieves,
 As on some wall or tree the ivy grows
 That living laurel—where their chosen nest
 My high thoughts made, where sigh'd mine ardent
 grief,
 Yet never stirr'd of its fair boughs a leaf—
 To heav'n translated, in my heart, her rest,
 Left deep its roots, whence ever with sad cry
 I call on her, who ne'er vouchsafes reply.

SONNET LI.

He cares not for the world, and thinks of Heaven embellished by the beauty of
Laura.

My days more swiftly than the forest hind
 Have fled like shadows, and no pleasure seen
 Save for a moment, and few hours serene,
 Whose bitter-sweet I treasure in true mind.
 O wretched world, unstable, wayward! Blind
 Whose hopes in thee alone have centred been;
 In thee my heart was captiv'd by her mien
 Who bore it with her when she earth rejoin'd:
 Her better spirit, now a deathless flow'r,
 And in the highest heav'n that still shall be,
 Each day inflames me with its beauties more.
 Alone, tho' frailer, fonder ev'ry hour,
 I muse on her, *Now what, and where is she,*
And what the lovely veil which here she wore?

SONNET LII.

He revisits Vaucluse.

I FEEL mine ancient air: and see where rise
 Mine own sweet hills, where sprung that star so bright
 Which, while heav'n pleas'd, with passion and delight,
 As now with tears and sorrow, fill'd mine eyes.
 O vain and foolish thoughts! hopes born to fade!
 Turbid the stream, the green bow'rs in decay,
 Empty and cold the nest in which she lay,
 Where now I live, where dead I would be laid:
 I hop'd from the bright eyes which fir'd my breast,
 From the soft sighs, she might at length afford
 To my worn wounded soul some hope of rest.
 But no—I serv'd a stern and thankless lord;
 Alive, with a vain flame he let me burn,
 And dead, he leaves me o'er her dust to mourn.

SONNET LIII.

The sight of Laura's house reminds him how happy he had been and how wretched
 he is.

Is this the nest in which my Phoenix first
 Her plumage donn'd of purple and of gold,
 Beneath her wings who knew my heart to hold,
 For whom e'en yet its sighs and wishes burst?
 Prime root in which my cherisht ill had birth,
 Where is the fair face whence that bright light came,
 Alive and glad which kept me in my flame?
 Now blest in heav'n as then alone on earth;
 Wretched and lonely thou hast left me here,
 Fond ling'ring by the scenes, with sorrow drown'd,
 To thee which consecrate I still revere.
 Watching the hills as dark night gathers round,
 Whence its last flight to heav'n thy soul did take,
 And where my day those bright eyes wont to make.

SONNET LIV.

To the memory of James Colonna, who died before Petrarch could reply to a letter
of his.

NE'ER shall I see again with eyes unwet,
Or with the sure pow'rs of a tranquil mind,
Those characters where Love so brightly shin'd,
And his own hand Affection seem'd to set;
Spirit! amid earth's strifes unconquer'd yet,
Breathing such sweets from heav'n which now has shrin'd,
As once more to my wand'ring verse has joined
The style which Death had led me to forget.
Another work, than my young leaves more bright,
I thought to show: what envying evil star,
Snatch'd thee, my noble treasure, thus from me?
So soon who hides thee from my fond heart's sight,
And from thy praise my loving tongue would bar?
My soul has rest, sweet sigh! alone in thee.

CANZONE III.

The Six Visions.

WHILE, at my window, late I stood alone,
So new and many things there crost my sight,
To view them I had almost weary grown.
A dappled hind appear'd upon the right,
In aspect gentle yet of stately stride,
By two swift greyhounds chas'd, a black, and white,
Who tore in the poor side
Of that fair creature wounds so deep and wide,
That soon they forc'd her where ravine and rock
The onward passage block:
Then triumph'd Death her matchless beauties o'er,
And left me lonely there her sad fate to deplore.

Upon the summer wave a gay ship danc'd,
Her cordage was of silk, of gold her sails,

Her sides with ivory and ebon glanc'd,
 The sea was tranquil, favouring were the gales,
 And heaven as when no cloud its azure veils.
 A rich and goodly merchandise is hers;
 But soon the tempest wakes
 And wind and wave to such mad fury stirs,
 That, driven on the rocks, in twain she breaks;
 My heart with pity aches,
 That a short hour should overwhelm, a small space hide
 Riches for which the world no equal had beside.

In a fair grove a bright young laurel made
 —Surely to Paradise the plant belongs!
 Of sacred boughs a pleasant summer shade,
 From whose green depths there issued so sweet songs
 Of various birds, and many a rare delight
 Of eye and ear, what marvel from the world
 They stole my senses quite!
 While still I gaz'd, the heavens grew black around,
 The fatal lightning flash'd, and sudden hurl'd,
 Uprooted to the ground,
 That blessed birth. Alas! for it laid low,
 And its dear shade whose like we ne'er again shall know.

A crystal fountain in that very grove
 Gush'd from a rock, whose waters fresh and clear
 Shed coolness round and softly murmur'd love,
 Never that leafy screen and mossy seat
 Drew browsing flock or whistling rustic near
 But Nymphs and Muses danc'd to music sweet.
 There as I sate and drank
 With infinite delight their carols gay
 And mark'd their sport, the earth before me sank
 And bore with it away
 The fountain and the scene, to my great grief,
 Who now in memory find a sole and scant relief.

A lovely and rare bird within the wood,
Whose crest with gold, whose wings with purple gleam'd,
Alone, but proudly soaring, next I view'd,
Of heavenly and immortal birth which seem'd,
Flitting now here, now there, until it stood
Where buried fount and broken laurel lay,
And sadly seeing there
The fallen trunk, the boughs all stript and bare,
The channel dried—for all things to decay
So tend—it turn'd away
As if in angry scorn, and instant fled,
While thro' me for her loss new love and pity spread.

At length along the flowery sward I saw
So sweet and fair a Lady pensive move
That her mere thought inspires a tender awe;
Meek in herself but haughty against Love,
Flow'd from her waist a robe so fair and fine
Seem'd gold and snow together there to join:
But ah! each charm above
Was veil'd from sight in an unfriendly cloud:
Stung by a lurking snake as flow'rs that pine,
Her head she gently bow'd,
And joyful passed on high, perchance secure:
Alas! that in the world grief only should endure.

.

My Song! in each sad change,
These visions, as they rise, sweet, solemn, strange,
But show how deeply in thy master's breast
The fond desire abides to die and be at rest.

BALLATA.

His grief at surviving her is mitigated, for now she knows his heart.

YES, Love, while hope still bloom'd with me in pride,
While seemed of all my faith the guerdon nigh,
She, upon whom for mercy I relied,
Was ravish'd from my doting desolate eye.

O ruthless Death! O Life unwelcome! *this*
Plung'd me in deepest woe,
And rudely crush'd my ev'ry hope of bliss;
Against my will *that* keeps me here below,
Who else would yearn to go,
And join the sainted fair who left us late;
Yet present ev'ry hour
In my heart's core there wields she her old pow'r,
And knows, whate'er my life, its ev'ry state!

CANZONE IV.

He recalls her many graces from the day when he first saw her.

FAIN would I speak—too long has silence seal'd
Lips that would gladly with my full heart move
With one consent, and yield
Homage to her who listens from above—
Yet how can I, without thy prompting, Love,
With mortal words e'er equal things divine,
And picture faithfully
The high humility whose chosen shrine
Was that fair prison whence she now is free;
Which held, erewhile, her gentle spirit, when
So in my conscious heart her pow'r began,
That, instantly, I ran,
—Alike o' th' year and me 'twas April then—
From these gay meadows round sweet flow'rs to bind,
Hoping rich pleasure at her eyes to find.

The walls were alabaster, the roof gold,
Ivory the doors, the sapphire windows lent
Whence on my heart of old
Its earliest sigh, as shall my last, was sent;
In arrowy jets of fire thence came and went
Arm'd messengers of love, whereof to think
As then they were, with awe
—Tho' now for them with laurel crown'd—I shrink.
Of one rare diamond, square, without a flaw,
High in the midst a stately throne was plac'd
Where sate the lovely Lady all alone:
In front a column shone
Of crystal, and thereon each thought was trac'd
In characters so clear, and quick, and true,
By turns it gladden'd me and griev'd to view.

To weapons such as these, sharp, burning, bright,
To the green glorious banner wav'd above,
—'Gainst which would fail in fight
Mars, Polypheme, Apollo, mighty Jove—
While still my sorrow fresh and verdant throve,
I stood defenceless, doom'd; her easy prey
She led me as she chose
Whence to escape I knew nor art nor way;
But, as a friend, who, haply, grieves yet goes,
Sees something still to lure his eyes and heart,
Just so on her, for whom I am in thrall,
Sole perfect work of all
That grac'd her age, unable to depart,
With such desire my rapt regards I set,
As soon myself and misery to forget.

On earth myself, my heart in Eden dwelt,
Lost in sweet Lethe every other care,
As my live frame I felt
To marble turn watching that wonder rare;

When old in years but youthful still in air,
A Lady briefly, quietly drew nigh,
And thus beholding me,
With reverent aspect and admiring eye,
Kind offer made my counsellor to be;
"My pow'r," she said, "is more than mortals know;
Lighter than air, I, in an instant, make
Their hearts exult or ache,
I loose and bind whate'er is seen below;
Thine eyes, upon that sun, as eagles', bend,
But to my words with willing ears attend.

The day when she was born, the stars that win
Prosperity for man shone bright above;
Their high glad homes within
Each on the other smil'd with gratulant love;
Fair Venus, and, with gentle aspect, Jove
The beautiful and lordly mansions held:
Seem'd as each adverse light
Throughout all heav'n was darken'd and dispell'd;
The sun ne'er look'd upon a day so bright;
The air and earth rejoic'd: the waves had rest
By lake and river, and o'er ocean green:
'Mid the enchanting scene
One distant cloud alone my thought distrest,
Lest sometime it might be of tears the source
Unless kind Heav'n should elsewhere turn its course.

When first she enter'd on this life below,
Which to say sooth not worthy was to hold,
'Twas strange to see her so
Angelical and dear, in baby mould;
A snowy pearl she seem'd in finest gold;
Next as she crawl'd, or totter'd with short pace,
Wood, water, earth, and stone
Grew green, and clear, and soft: with livelier grace

The sword beneath her feet and fingers shone :
With flow'rs the champain to her bright eyes smil'd ;
At her sweet voice, babbling thro' lips that yet
From love's own fount were wet,
The hoarse wind silent grew, the tempest mild :
Thus clearly showing to the dull blind world
How much in her was Heav'n's own light unfurl'd.

At length, her life's third flowery epoch won,
She, year by year, so grew in charms and worth,
That ne'er, methinks, the sun
Such gracefulness and beauty saw on earth ;
Her eyes so full of modesty and mirth,
Music and welcome on her words so hung,
That mute in her high praise,
Which thine alone may sound, is ev'ry tongue :
So bright her countenance with heavenly rays,
Not long thy dazzled vision there may rest :
From this her fair and fleshly tenement
Such fire thro' thine is sent
(Tho' gentler never kindled human breast)
That yet I fear her sudden flight may be
Too soon the cause of bitter grief to thee."

This said, she turned her to the rapid wheel
Whereon she winds of mortal life the thread ;
Too true did she reveal
The doom of woe which darken'd o'er my head !
A few brief years flew by,
When she, for whom I so desire to die,
By black and pitiless Death, who could not slay
A fairer form than hers, was snatch'd away !

SONNET LV.

Death may deprive him of the sight of her beauties, but not of the memory of her virtues.

Now hast thou done the utmost of thy pow'r
 O cruel Death! hast now improv'rishéd
 The reign of love, of beauty now the flow'r
 And light hast spent, and shut in thy cold bed;
 Now hast thou spoil'd our life, and from its sky
 Hast ev'ry grace and sovran honour reft,
 But fame and virtue, these, which never die,
 Exceed thy pow'r, their bones alone are left;
 The rest is Heav'n's, which more serene and clear,
 As from some brighter sun, has joy and pride,
 While earth the memory of her good holds dear.
 Angell in its great victory, pity guide
 Your heart above some grace on me to show,
 As erst your beauty conquer'd mine below.

SONNET LVI.

Her own virtues immortalise her in Heaven, and his praises on earth.

THE air, and scent, the comfort and the shade
 Of my sweet laurel, and its flowery sight
 That to my weary life gave rest and light,
 Death, spoiler of the world, has lowly laid.
 As when the moon our sun's eclipse has made,
 My lofty light has vanisht so in night;
 For aid against himself I Death invite;
 With thoughts so dark does Love my breast invade.
 Thou didst but sleep, bright Lady, a brief sleep
 In bliss amid the chosen spirits to wake,
 Who gaze upon their God, distinct and near:
 And if my verse shall any value keep,
 Preserv'd and prais'd 'mid noble minds to make
 Thy name, its memory shall be deathless here.

SONNET LVII.

He reverts to their fatal farewell.

THE last, alas! of my bright days and glad
 —Few have been mine in this brief life below—
 Had come; I felt my heart as tepid snow,
 Presage perchance of days both dark and sad.
 As one in nerves, and pulse, and spirits bad,
 Who of some frequent fever waits the blow,
 E'en so I felt—for how could I foreknow
 Such near end of the half-joys I have had?
 Her beauteous eyes, in heav'n now bright and blest
 With the pure light whence health and life descends
 (Wretched and beggar'd leaving me behind)
 With chaste and soul-lit beams our grief address:
*Tarry ye here in peace, beloved friends,
 Tho' here no more, we yet shall there be join'd.*

SONNET LVIII.

He was blind not to know that her looks on that day would be his last.

DARK hour, last moment of that fatal day!
 Stars which to beggar me of bliss combin'd!
 O faithful glance, too well which seem'dst to say
 Farewell to me, farewell to peace of mind!
 Awaken'd now, my losses I survey:
 Alas! I fondly thought—thoughts weak and blind!—
 That absence would take part not all away;
 How many hopes it scatter'd to the wind.
 Heav'n had already doom'd it otherwise,
 To quench for ever my life's genial light,
 And in her sad sweet face 'twas written so.
 Surely a veil was plac'd around mine eyes;
 That blinded me to all before their sight,
 And sank at once my life in deepest woe.

SONNET LIX.

He should have foreseen his loss in the unusual lustre of her eyes.

THAT glance of hers, pure, tender, clear and sweet,
 Methought it said, *Take what thou canst while nigh:*
For here no more thou'lt see me, till on high
From earth have mounted thy slow-moving feet.
 O intellect than forest pard more fleet!
 Yet slow and dull thy sorrow to descry,
 How didst thou fail to see in her bright eye
 What since befel, whence I my ruin meet.
 Silently shining with a fire sublime,
 They said, *O friendly lights, which long have been*
Mirrors to us where gladly we were seen,
Heav'n waits for you, as ye shall know in time;
Who bound us to the earth dissolves our bond,
But wills in your despite that you shall live beyond.

CANZONE V.

Memory is his only solace and support.

I WHO was wont from life's best fountain far
 So long to wander, searching land and sea,
 Pursuing not my pleasure but my star,
 And alway, as love knows who strengthen'd me,
 Ready in bitter exile to depart,
 For hope and memory both then fed my heart;
 Alas! now wring my hands, and to unkind
 And angry Fortune, which away has reft
 That so sweet hope, my armour have resign'd;
 And, memory only left,
 I feed my great desire on that alone,
 Whence frail and famish'd is my spirit grown.

As haply by the way, if want of food
 Compel the traveller to relax his speed,

Losing that strength which first his steps endued,
So feeling, for my weary life, the need
Of that dear nourishment death rudely stole,
Leaving the world all bare, and sad my soul,
From time to time fair pleasures pall, my sweet
To bitter turns, fear rises, and hopes fail,
My course, tho' brief, that I shall e'er complete:
Cloudlike before the gale,
To win some resting-place from rest I flee,
—If such indeed my doom, so let it be.

Never to mortal life could I incline,
—Be witness, Love, with whom I parley oft—
Except for her who was its light and mine.
And since, below extinguish'd, shines aloft
The life in which I liv'd, if lawful 'twere,
My chief desire would be to follow her:
But mine is ample cause of grief, for I
To see my future fate was ill supplied;
This Love reveal'd within her beauteous eye
Elsewhere my hopes to guide:
Too late he dies, disconsolate and sad,
Whom death a little earlier had made glad.

In those bright eyes, where wont my heart to dwell,
Until by envy my hard fortune stirr'd
Rose from so rich a temple to expel,
Love with his proper hand had character'd
In lines of pity what, ere long, I ween
The issue of my old desire had been.
Dying alone, and not my life with me,
Comely and sweet it then had been to die,
Leaving my life's best part unscath'd and free;
But now my fond hopes lie
Dead in her silent dust: a secret chill
Shoots thro' me when I think that I live still.

If my poor intellect had but the force
 To help my need, and if no other lure
 Had led it from the plain and proper course,
 Upon my Lady's brow 'twere easy sure
 To have read this truth, *Here all thy pleasure dies,*
And hence thy lifelong trial dates its rise.
 My spirit then had gently past away
 In her dear presence from all mortal care;
 Freed from this troublesome and heavy clay,
 Mounting, before her, where
 Angels and saints prepar'd on high her place,
 Whom I but follow now with slow sad pace.

My Song! if one there be
 Who in his love finds happiness and rest,
 Tell him this truth from me,
Die, while thou still art blest,
For death betimes is comfort not dismay,
And who can rightly die needs no delay.

SESTINA.

In his misery he desires death so much the more when he remembers his past
 contentment and comfort.

My favouring fortune and my life of joy,
 My days so cloudless, and my tranquil nights,
 The tender sigh, the pleasing pow'r of song
 Which gently went to sound in verse and rhyme,
 Suddenly darken'd into grief and tears,
 Make me hate life and inly pray for death!

O cruel, grim, inexorable Death!
 How hast thou dried my ev'ry source of joy,
 And left me to drag on a life of tears,
 Thro' darkling days and melancholy nights.
 My heavy sighs no longer meet in rhyme,
 And my hard martyrdom exceeds all song!

Where now is vanish'd my once amorous song?
To talk of anger, and to treat with death;
Where the fond verses, where the happy rhyme
Welcom'd by gentle hearts with pensive joy?
Where now love's communings that cheer'd my nights?
My sole theme, my one thought is now but tears!

Erewhile to my desire so sweet were tears
Their tenderness refin'd my else rude song,
And made me wake and watch the livelong nights;
But sorrow now to me is worse than death,
Since lost for aye that look of modest joy,
The lofty subject of my lowly rhyme!

Love in those bright eyes to my ready rhyme
Gave a fair theme, now chang'd, alas! to tears;
With grief remembering that time of joy,
My chang'd thoughts issue find in other song,
Evermore thee beseeching, pallid Death,
To snatch and save me from these painful nights!

Sleep has departed from my anguish'd nights,
Music is absent from my rugged rhyme,
Which knows not now to sound of aught but death;
Its notes so thrilling once all turn'd to tears,
Love knows not in his reign such varied song,
As full of sadness now as then of joy!

Man liv'd not then so crown'd like me with joy,
Man lives not now such wretched days and nights;
And my full festering grief but swells the song
Which from my bosom draws the mournful rhyme;
I liv'd in hope who now live but in tears,
Nor against death have other hope save death!

Me Death in her has kill'd; and only death
Can to my sight restore that face of joy,

Which pleasant made to me e'en sighs and tears,
Balmy the air, and dewy soft the nights,
Wherein my choicest thoughts I gave to rhyme
While Love inspirited my feeble song!

Would that such pow'r as erst grac'd Orpheus' song
Were mine to win my Laura back from death,
As he Eurydice without a rhyme;
Then would I live in best excess of joy;
Or, that denied me, soon may some sad night
Close for me ever these twin founts of tears!

Love! I have told with late and early tears,
My grievous injuries in doleful song;
Not that I hope from thee less cruel nights;
And therefore am I urg'd to pray for death,
Which hence would take me but to crown with joy,
Where lives she whom I sing in this sad rhyme!

If so high may aspire my weary rhyme,
To her now shelter'd safe from rage and tears,
Whose beauties fill e'en heav'n with livelier joy,
Well would she recognise my alter'd song,
Which haply pleas'd her once, ere yet by death
Her days were cloudless made and dark my nights!

O ye, who fondly sigh for better nights,
Who listen to love's will, or sing in rhyme,
Pray that for me be no delay in death,
The port of misery, the goal of tears,
But let him change for me his ancient song,
Since what makes others sad fills me with joy!

Ay! for such joy, in one or in few nights,
I pray in rude song and in anguish'd rhyme,
That soon my tears may ended be in death!

SONNET LX.

He hopes that Laura will call him to her in Heaven, and meet him there.

Go forth my sad rhymes, to the cold tomb go,
 Where deep in earth my dearest treasure lies,
 Go! call on her, from heav'n who soft replies,
 Tho' dwells her mortal frame obscure and low:
 Tell her that I of life now weary grow,
 In frail bark breasting the dread waves which rise;
 Gath'ring her scatter'd leaves, with anxious eyes
 I tread her track, alas! with step too slow.
 Alone of her I sing, living or dead,
 —Dead but to live in immortality—
 That by the world she known and lov'd may be.
 Pray her that she be near my dying bed,
 My spirit in its parting hence to greet,
 And where she reigns in heav'n, grant me by her a seat.

SONNET LXI.

He builds this hope upon the purity of his love.

If Mercy e'er rewardeth virtuous love,
 If Pity still can do, as she has done,
 I shall have rest, for clearer than the sun
 My Lady and the world my faith approve.
 Who fear'd me once, now knows, yet scarce believes
 I am the same who wont her love to seek,
 Who seek it still; where she but heard me speak,
 Or saw my face, she now my soul perceives.
 Wherefore I hope that e'en in heav'n she mourns
 My heavy anguish, and on me the while
 Her sweet face eloquent of pity turns,
 And that, when shuffled off this mortal coil,
 Her way to me with that fair band she'll wend,
 True follower of Christ and virtue's friend.

SONNET LXII.

Beauty showed itself in, and disappeared with, Laura.

'MID many fair one such by me was seen
 That amorous fears my heart did instant seize,
 Beholding her—nor false the images—
 Equal to angels in her heav'nly mien.
 Nothing in her was mortal or terrene,
 As one whom nothing short of heav'n can please;
 My soul well train'd for her to burn and freeze
 Sought in her wake to mount the blue serene.
 But ah! too high for earthly wings to rise
 Her pitch, and soon she wholly pass'd from sight;
 The very thought still makes me cold and numb;
 O beautiful and high and lustrous eyes,
 Where Death, who fills the world with grief and fright,
 Found entrance in so fair a form to come.

SONNET LXIII.

She is so fixed in his heart and sight, that at times he believes her still alive.

ON memory returns—no! there she stays,
 Nor by all Lethe thence can e'er be torn—
 Such as I saw her first, in youth's glad morn
 A star of beauty, beaming its best rays:
 Modest and fair as then she met my gaze,
 The same coy charms and calm grace still adorn:
Her very self, I cry, on earth yet borne,
 And her sweet voice to hear my fond heart prays:
 She answers now, and silent now remains;
 As wand'rer who the right way finds at last,
 I commune with my mind, *the spell retains*
Its old pow'r o'er thee, blotting out the past;
Long years have fled since her blest spirit burst
From earth's base shell, as day from darkness first.

SONNET LXIV.

Nature, against her wont, united all beauties in Laura, but quickly withdrew her
from sight.

THIS gift of beauty which a good men name,
 Frail, fleeting, fancied, false, a wind, a shade,
 Ne'er yet with all its spells one fair array'd,
 Save in this age when for my cost it came.
 Not such is Nature's duty, nor her aim,
 One to enrich if others poor are made,
 But now on one is all her wealth display'd,
 —Ladies, your pardon let my boldness claim.
 Like loveliness ne'er liv'd, or old or new,
 Nor ever shall, I ween, but hid so strange,
 Scarce did our erring world its marvel view
 So soon it fled; thus too my soul must change
 The little light vouchsaf'd me from the skies
 Only for pleasure of her sainted eyes.

SONNET LXV.

He no longer contemplates the mortal, but the immortal beauties of Laura.

O TIME! O Heav'ns! whose flying changes frame
 Errors and snares for mortals poor and blind;
 O days more swift than arrows or the wind,
 Experienc'd now, I know your treach'rous aim.
 You I excuse, myself alone I blame,
 For Nature for your flight who wings design'd
 To me gave eyes which still I have inclin'd
 To mine own ill, whence follow grief and shame.
 An hour will come, haply e'en now is past,
 Their sight to turn on my diviner part
 And so this infinite anguish end at last.
 Rejects not your long yoke, O Love, my heart,
 But its own ill by study, suff'rings vast:
 Virtue is not of chance, but painful art.

SONNET LXVI.

An allegory.

THAT which in fragrance and in hue defied
 The odoriferous and lucid East,
 Fruits, flow'rs and herbs and leaves, and whence the West
 Of all rare excellence obtain'd the prize,
 My Laurel sweet, which ev'ry beauty grac'd,
 Where ev'ry glowing virtue lov'd to dwell,
 Beheld beneath its fair and friendly shade
 My Lord, and by his side, my Goddess sit.
 Still have I plac'd in that beloved plant
 My home of choicest thoughts: in fire, in frost
 Shiv'ring or burning, still I have been blest.
 The world was of her perfect honours full
 When God, his own bright Heav'n therewith to grace,
 Reclaim'd her for Himself, for she was His.

SONNET LXVII.

The death of Laura is an universal loss.

DEATH! thou the world without a sun hast left,
 Obscure and cold, Love blind and wanting arms,
 Gentleness naked, Beauty without charms,
 Me sunk in sorrow and of quiet reft,
 Gaiety banish'd, Courtesy laid low
 —I mourn alone what all should with me mourn.
 For thou the fair germ hast of virtue torn,
 Its first worth spent, when shall a second blow?
 Ocean and air and earth her dirge should sing
 To the dull world, without her, which is made
 A flow'rless meadow and a gemless ring.
 It knew her not while still on earth she stay'd;
 I knew her, who in grief yet linger here,
 And Heav'n, who, in my loss, more beauteous doth
 appear.

SONNET LXVIII.

How unworthy his praises are of Laura.

So far as to mine eyes its light Heav'n show'd,
 So far as love and study train'd my wings,
 Novel and beautiful but mortal things
 From ev'ry star I found on her bestow'd:
 So many forms in rare and varied mode
 Of heav'nly beauty from immortal springs
 My panting intellect before me brings,
 Sunk my weak sight before their dazzling load.
 Hence whatsoe'er I spoke of her or wrote,
 Who, at God's right, returns me now her pray'rs,
 Is in that infinite abyss a mote:
 For style beyond the genius never dares;
 Thus, tho' upon the sun man fix his sight,
 He seeth less as fiercer burns its light.

SONNET LXIX.

He prays her to appear before him in sleep.

DEAR precious pledge of all my joy and pain,
 Whom Nature took and Heav'n still keeps away,
 Ah! why from me doth still thy pity stay,
 Accustom'd long my frail life to sustain;
 Erst with thy presence thou, at least, didst deign
 My dreams to bless, but let'st me now decay,
 Hopeless, unhelpt—for who that help gainsay?
 Surely above nor scorn nor anger reign!
 These may on earth move some else tender breast
 Awhile upon her lover's pains to feed,
 Till Love is baffled in his chosen nest.
 Thou dost my sharp ill know, my whole heart read,
 And canst alone, with thy dear shade, abate
 My sore complaint and end a grief so great.

SONNET LXX.

His prayer is heard.

WHAT angel of compassion hov'ring near
 Heard, and to heav'n my heart-grief instant bore,
 Whence now I feel descending as of yore
 My lady, in that bearing chaste and dear,
 My lone and melancholy heart to cheer,
 So free from pride, of humbleness such store,
 In fine so perfect, tho' at death's own door,
 I live, and life no more is dull and drear.
 Blessed is she who so can others bless
 With her fair sight, or with that tender speech
 To whose full meaning love alone can reach.
Dear friend, she says, thy pangs my soul distress ;
But for our good I did thy homage shun—
 In sweetest tones which might arrest the sun.

SONNET LXXI.

He describes the apparition of Laura.

FOOD wherewithal my Lord is well supplied,
 With tears and grief my weary heart I've fed;
 As fears within and paleness o'er me spread,
 Oft thinking on its fatal wound and wide:
 But in her time with whom no other vied,
 Equal or second, to my suff'ring bed
 Comes she, to look on whom I almost dread,
 And takes her seat in pity by my side.
 With that fair hand, so long desir'd in vain,
 She check'd my tears, while at her accents crept
 A sweetness to my soul intense, divine.
Is this thy wisdom, to parade thy pain ?
No longer weep ! hast thou not amply wept ?
Would that such life were yours as death is mine !

SONNET LXXII.

He would die of grief but that at times she consoles him by her presence.

RECALLING the soft looks which heav'n adorn,
 The sweet face, and, half bow'd, the sunbright hair,
 That modest angel voice, whose music rare
 There sooth'd the heart which now is left forlorn.
 I marvel much I still in life am borne;
 Nor should I live, but she (who, good and fair
 Which most she was, left still in doubt) is there,
 Ready to shield me and to save each morn.
 O then our welcomings how sweet yet chaste,
 And how attentively she notes and hears
 The tender history of my lifelong pains!
 But in the East when day's bright step is trac'd
 She turns to heav'n, her own home that appears,
 With glist'ning eye and cheek which pity stains.

SONNET LXXIII.

He complains of his fate, which nothing consoles.

LOVE, haply, was erewhile a sweet relief;
 I scarce know when; but now it bitter grows
 Beyond all else. Who learns from life well knows,
 As I have learnt to know from heavy grief:
 She, of our age, who was its honour chief,
 Who now in heav'n with brighter lustre glows,
 Has robb'd my being of the sole repose
 It knew in life, tho' that was rare and brief.
 Pitiless Death my ev'ry good has ta'en!
 Not the great bliss of her fair spirit freed
 Can aught console the adverse life I lead.
 I wept and sang; who now can wake no strain,
 But day and night the pent griefs of my soul
 From eyes and tongue in tears and verses roll.

SONNET LXXIV.

Reflecting that Laura is in heaven, he repents his excessive grief, and is consoled.

SORROW and Love encourag'd my poor tongue
 Discreet in sadness, where it should not go,
 To speak of her for whom I burn'd and sung,
 What even were it true 'twere wrong to show.
 That blessed saint my miserable state
 Might surely soothe, and ease my spirit's strife,
 Since she in heav'n is now domesticate
 With Him who ever rul'd her heart in life.
 Wherefore I am contented and consol'd,
 Nor would again in life her form behold;
 Nay, I prefer to die, and live alone.
 Fairer than ever to my mental eye,
 I see her soaring with the angels high
 Before our Lord, her Maker and my own.

SONNET LXXV.

Apotheosis and glory of Laura in heaven.

THE chosen angels and the spirits blest,
 Celestial citizens, the very day
 My Lady pass'd above, around her prest,
 Full of surprise and fondness to survey.
What light is this, in such new beauty drest?
Never in all this age such bright array
From erring earth to our high heavenly rest
Ascended thus—among themselves they say.
 Well pleas'd to leave her sublunary home,
 With the most perfect there in bliss to vie,
 She turns her still at times to look behind,
 Watching my progress, waiting till I come:
 Thus all my thoughts and wishes seek the sky,
 Whither she bids me haste herself again to find.

SONNET LXXVI.

New protestations of the purity of his love, and new prayers that she will call him to her in heaven.

LADY, in bliss who, by our Maker's feet,
 As suited for thine excellent life alone,
 Art now enthron'd in high and glorious seat,
 Adorn'd with charms nor pearls nor purple own ;
 O model, high and rare, of ladies sweet !
 Now in His face to whom all things are known,
 Look on my love, with that pure faith replete,
 As long my verse and truest tears have shown,
 And know at last my heart on earth to thee
 Was still as now in heav'n, nor wish'd in life
 More than beneath thine eyes' bright sun to be :
 Wherefore, to recompense the tedious strife
 Which turn'd my liege heart from the world away,
 Pray that I soon may come with thee to stay.

SONNET LXXVIL

In the hope that the previous prayer may be granted.

YES, from those finest eyes, that face most sweet
 That ever shone, and from that loveliest hair,
 With which nor gold nor sunbeam may compare,
 That speech with love, that smile with grace replete,
 From those soft hands, those white arms which defeat,
 Themselves unmov'd, the stoutest hearts that e'er
 To Love were rebels, from those feet so fair,
 From her whole form for Eden only meet
 My spirit took its life—now these delight
 The King of Heaven and his angelic train
 While, blind and naked, I am left in night.
 One only balm expect I 'mid my pain
 That she, mine ev'ry thought who now can see,
 May win this grace that I with her may be.

SONNET LXXVIII

He hopes and thinks that the day of their reunion may be at hand.

METHINKS from hour to hour her voice I hear;
 Madonna calls me! I would fain obey;
 Within, without I feel myself decay;
 And am so alter'd—not with many a year—
 That to myself a stranger I appear;
 All my old usual life is put away;
 Could I but know how long I have to stay:
 Grant Heav'n! the long-wish'd summons may be near.
 O blest the day when from this earthly gaol
 I shall be freed, when burst and broken lies
 This mortal guise, so heavy yet so frail,
 When from this black night my sav'd spirit flies,
 Soaring, up up above the bright serene,
 Where with my Lord my Lady shall be seen.

SONNET LXXIX.

He speaks to her in sleep of his sufferings, and overcome by her sympathy awakes.

ON my oft-troubled sleep my sacred air
 So softly breathes, at last I courage take,
 To tell her of my past and present ache,
 Which never in her life my heart did dare.
 I first that glance so full of love declare
 Which serv'd my lifelong torment to awake,
 Next, how, content and wretched for her sake,
 Love day by day my tost heart knew to tear.
 She speaks not, but, with pity's dewy trace,
 Intently looks on me, and gently sighs,
 While pure and lustrous tears begem her face;
 My spirit, which her sorrow fiercely tries,
 So to behold her weep with anger burns,
 And freed from slumber to itself returns.

SONNET LXXX.

So far from fearing, he prays for death.

EACH day to me seems as a thousand years,
 That I my dear and faithful star pursue,
 Who guided me on earth, and guides me too
 By a sure path to life without its tears.
 For in the world, familiar now, appears
 No snare to tempt; so rare a light and true
 Shines e'en from heav'n my secret conscience thro',
 Of lost time and lov'd sin the glass it rears.
 Not that I need the threats of death to dread,
 (Which He who lov'd us bore with greater pain)
 That, firm and constant, I his path should tread;
 'Tis but a brief while since in ev'ry vein
 Of her he enter'd who my fate has been,
 Yet troubled not the least her brow serene.

SONNET LXXXI.

Since her death he has ceased to live.

FOUL death no triumph o'er that fair face could,
 But e'en foul death a charm from it could gain:
 Death's road can ne'er be trod in better train:
 She beckons me, from whom I learn all good.
 But He, for man who spar'd not his own blood,
 The brazen gates of Hell who broke in twain,
 Seems by His cross to banish all my pain:
 Then welcome, Death! sole friend whom now I would.
 Delay not, for the time is apt at last;
 Better perchance had my departure been
 What time from mortal life my Lady past.
 Since then no day of life I e'er have seen.
 One way we travell'd, and one home we sought,
 My journey to an end with hers is brought.

CANZONE VI.

She appears to him in sleep: their conversation.

WHEN she my faithful comforter and dear,
Of gentlest speech, with sense and sweetness rife,
To give some respite to my weary life,
Deigns by my desolate bed in dreams appear,
Old fondness mastering my instant fear,
I ask, "Whence come you here, O spirit blest?"
She then from her fair breast
One branch of laurel draws and one of palm,
And answers, "From the calm
Bliss of the saints who share my heavenly home,
Your grief to end, for this alone, I come!"

Rendering by grateful words and reverent air
My thanks, I ask her how she comes to know
My wretched state? And she: "The sateless woe
Whose floods on your pale cheeks sad channels wear,
And those deep frequent sighs, indulg'd too long,
Ascend to Heav'n, and there disturb my peace;
What now you deem a wrong
From mortal cares that I have found release,
And join'd the heavenly throng,
Should, if indeed you lov'd me, as long seem'd
From your fond verse, a blessing be esteem'd!"

I answer, "Certain of your bliss on high,
As of a thing one sees distinct and near
I only of myself complain that I
Am left in martyrdom and darkness here;
For how could God and Nature ever place
Such excellent virtue in so young a breast,
Unless eternal rest
Were destin'd to reward its life of grace;
O of the spirits blest!
How brightly our vile world did you adorn,
And ah! to Heav'n how quickly from us torn."

"What else than cureless tears are left for me,
Lone, wretched, since my all with you was ta'en;
Better have perish'd at the breast than be
The lifelong victim of this amorous pain."
—"Still better were it to o'ercome this vain
And sinful grief, to spread aloft your wings,
And this poor dross of earth,
The fond false dreams to which the heart yet clings,
Weigh'd at their proper worth,
Follow, if true your vaunted love, where glow
These deathless boughs and streams of crystal flow!"

"Fain would I learn," then question I, "what mean
These two green branches treasur'd so by you."
And she: "Nay this at least, methought, you knew;
For one long honour'd by your praise has been.
The palm speaks victory which my youth obtain'd
Over the world and self: the laurel tells
The triumph fairly gain'd,
Thanks be to God my weakness who sustain'd!
If aught in you rebels
O turn to Him for help that we may meet,
Your race too run, before His mercy-seat!"

"Are these the tresses light in links of gold,
Which still enslave me, these the lustrous eyes
Which were my sun?"—"This passion is unwise."
Thus mildly she rebukes me, "Be consol'd!
A naked spirit, my sole joy in heaven,
The charms you prize have long in dust been laid,
Tho' for your sake still given
To seem the same as erst, and, haply, even
More lovely to be made
And dear, if this my chastening love secures
At once the safety of my soul and yours."

I weep, and my pale cheek
 She, with her fair hand drying, softly sighs ;
 Then, in such words as break
 The rocks in twain, she chides my gushing eyes,
 And when at length she parts sleep with her flies!

CANZONE VII.

The Judgment of Reason.

LONG had I suffer'd, till—to combat more
 In strength, in hope too sunk—at last before
 Impartial Reason's seat,
 Whence she presides our nobler nature o'er
 I summon'd my old tyrant, stern and sweet :
 There, groaning 'neath a weary weight of grief,
 With fear and horror stung,
 Like one who dreads to die and prays relief,
 My plea I open'd thus: " When life was young
 I, weakly, plac'd my peace within his pow'r,
 And nothing from that hour
 Save wrong I've met: so many and so great
 The torments I have borne,
 That my once infinite patience is outworn,
 And my life worthless grown is held in very hate!

Thus sadly has my time till now dragg'd by
 In flames and anguish: I have left each way
 Of honour, use, and joy,
 This my most cruel flatterer to obey.
 What wit so rare such language to employ
 That yet may free me from this wretched thrall,
 Or even my complaint,
 So great and just, against this ingrate paint?
 O little sweet! much bitterness and gall!

How have you chang'd my life, so tranquil, ere
With the false witchery blind,
That alone lur'd me to his amorous snare!
If right I judge, a mind
I boasted once with higher feelings rife,
—But he destroy'd my peace, he plung'd me in this strife!

Less for myself to care, thro' him I've grown,
And less my God to honour than I ought:
Thro' him my every thought
On a frail beauty blindly have I thrown;
In this my counsellor he stood alone,
Still prompt with cruel aid so to provoke
My young desire, that I
Hop'd respite from his harsh and heavy yoke.
But ah! what boots—though changing time sweep by,
If from this changeless passion nought can save—
A genius proud and high?
Or what Heav'n's other envied gifts to have,
If still I groan the slave
Of the fierce despot whom I here accuse,
Who turns e'en my sad life to his triumphant use?

'Twas he who made me desert countries seek,
Wild tribes and nations dangerous, manners rude,
My path with thorns he strew'd,
And ev'ry error that betrays the weak.
Valley and mountain, marsh, and stream, and sea,
On every side his snares were set for me.
In June December came,
With present peril and sharp toil the same;
Alone they left me never, neither he,
Nor she, whom I so fled, my other foe:
Untimely in my tomb,
If by some painful death not yet laid low,
My safety from such doom
Heaven's gracious pity not this tyrant deigns,
Who feeds upon my grief, and profits in my pains!

No quiet hour, since first I own'd his reign,
I've known, nor hope to know: repose is fled
From my unfriendly bed,
Nor herb, nor spells can bring it back again.
By fraud and force he gain'd and guards his pow'r
O'er every sense: soundeth from steeple near,
By day, by night, the hour,
I feel his hand in every stroke I hear.
Never did cankerworm fair tree devour,
As he my heart, wherein, he, gnawing lurks,
And, there, my ruin works.
Hence my past martyrdom and tears arise,
My present speech, these sighs,
Which tear and tire myself, and haply thee,
—Judge then between us both, thou knowest him and me!"

With fierce reproach my adversary rose:
"Lady!" he spoke, "the rebel to a close
Is heard at last, the truth
Receive from me which he has shrunk to tell;
Big words to bandy, specious lies to sell,
He plies right well the vile trade of his youth,
Freed from whose shame, to share
My easy pleasures, by my friendly care,
From each false passion which had work'd him ill,
Kept safe and pure, laments he, graceless, still
The sweet life he has gain'd?
And, blindly, thus his fortune dares he blame,
Who owes his very fame
To me, his genius who sublim'd, sustain'd,
In the proud flight to which he, else, had dar'd not aim?

Well knows he how, in history's ev'ry page,
The laurell'd chief, the monarch on his throne,
The poet and the sage,
Favourites of fortune, or for virtue known,

Were curst by evil stars, in loves debas'd
Soulless and vile, their hearts, their fame to waste:
While I, for him alone,
From all the lovely ladies of the earth,
Chose one, so grac'd with beauty and with worth,
The eternal sun her equal ne'er beheld.
Such charm was in her life,
Such virtue in her speech with music rife,
Their wond'rous pow'r dispell'd
Each vain and vicious fancy from his heart,
—A foe I am indeed, if this a foeman's part!

Such was my anger, these my hate and slights,
Than all which others could bestow more sweet:
Evil for good I meet,
If thus ingratitude my grace requites.
So high, upon my wings, he soar'd in fame,
To hear his song, fair dames and gentle knights
In throngs delighted came.
Among the gifted spirits of our time
His name conspicuous shines; in every clime
Admir'd, approv'd, his strains an echo find.
Such is he but for me,
A mere court flatterer who was doom'd to be,
Unmark'd amid his kind,
Till, in my school, exalted and made known
By her, who, of her sex, stood peerless and alone!

If my great service more there need to tell,
I have so fenc'd and fortified him well,
That his pure mind on nought
Of gross or grovelling now can brook to dwell;
Modest and sensitive, in deed, word, thought,
Her captive from his youth, she so her fair
And virtuous image prest
Upon his heart it left its likeness there:
Whate'er his life has shown of good or great,

In aim or action, he from us possest.
Never was midnight dream
So full of error as to us his hate!
For, Heaven's and man's esteem
If still he keep, the praise is due to us,
Whom in its thankless pride his blind rage censures thus!

In fine, 'twas I, my past love to exceed,
Who heavenward fixed his hope, who gave him wings
To fly from mortal things,
Which to eternal bliss the path impede;
With his own sense, that, seeing how in her
Virtues and charms so great and rare combin'd,
A holy pride might stir
And to the Great First Cause exalt his mind,
(In his own verse confest this truth we see)
While that dear Lady whom I sent to be
The grace, the guard, and guide
Of his vain life."—But here a heart-deep groan
I sudden gave, and cried,
"Yes! sent and snatch'd her from me." He replied,
"Not I, but Heaven above, which will'd her for its own!"

At length before that high tribunal each—
With anxious trembling I, while in his mien
Was conscious triumph seen—
With earnest pray'r concluded thus his speech:
"Speak, noble Lady! we thy judgment wait."
She then with equal air:
"It glads me to have heard your keen debate,
But, in a cause so great,
More time and thought it needs just verdict to declare!"

SONNET LXXXII.

He finds himself old, and awakes.

My faithful mirror oft to me has told—
 My weary spirit and my shrivell'd skin
 My failing pow'rs to prove it all begin—
Deceive thyself no longer, thou art old.
 Man is in all by nature best controll'd,
 And if with her we struggle time creeps in;
 At the sad truth, on fire as waters win,
 A long and heavy sleep is off me roll'd;
 And I see clearly our vain life depart,
 That more than once our being cannot be;
 Her voice sounds ever in my inmost heart,
 Who now from her fair earthly frame is free;
 She walk'd the world so peerless and alone,
 Its fame and lustre all with her are flown.

SONNET LXXXIII.

Laura is so fixed in his heart that he seems to be with and to speak to her in Heaven.

So oft to Heav'n on wings of thought I soar,
 I almost seem to stand within the pale,
 One of the blest who there have laid up store,
 Leaving below the body's shatter'd veil.
 At times a sweet cold thrills my bosom o'er
 Hearing her voice who brought me this long ail;
Friend, now I honour thee and love thee more,
For these chang'd manners and this aspect frail.
 She leads me to her Lord. On reverent knee,
 Humbly I pray, this grace that He concede,
 That I might stay His face and hers to see.
 He answers: *Man, thy future is decreed,*
On earth to tarry twenty, thirty years;
Short space, tho' long to thee the time appears.

SONNET LXXXIV.

Freed from the bonds of love, disgusted and weary with life, he devotes himself to
God.

DEATH has the bright sun quench'd which wont to burn;
Her pure and constant eyes his dark realms hold:
She now is dust, who dealt me heat and cold;
To common trees my chosen laurels turn;
Hence I at once my bliss and bane discern.
None now there is my feelings who can mould
From fire to frost, from timorous to bold,
In grief to languish or with hope to yearn.
Out of his tyrant hands who harms and heals,
Erewhile who made in it such havoc sore,
My heart the bitter-sweet of freedom feels.
And to the Lord whom, thankful, I adore,
The heavens who ruleth merely with his brow,
I turn life-weary, if not satiate, now.

SONNET LXXXV.

He confesses and regrets his sins, and prays God to save him from eternal death.

IN flames Love kept me one and twenty years,
Pleas'd with the fire and hopeful amid pain;
And when my Lady pass'd to Heav'n again
(My heart went with her) for ten more in tears.
Now weary grown, my life in blame appears
For so great error: virtue's seed in vain
To me was lent; these last days I would fain
Great God! to thee devote with rev'rent fears;
Contrite and sham'd my mispent years to see,
Years which I should have spent in better use
Tranquillity to seek and trouble flee:
May it please God, who in this prison mews,
Hence, from eternal loss, my soul to free,
For now I know my fault, nor ask excuse.

SONNET LXXXVI.

He humbles himself before God, and with tears implores mercy in his dying hour.

CEASELESS I mourn the times which are gone by
 When to vain things of earth my soul did cling,
 Nor soar'd adventurous, on heav'nward wing,
 Haply some proof to give of aim as high:
 Thou, who mine ev'ry crime with certain eye
 Dost mark, of Heav'n th' unseen immortal King!
 To my weak wand'ring soul thy succour bring,
 And with thy mercy its defect supply.
 Thus, if in strife and storm my life has past,
 My death may be in peace and port; if vain
 My stay, my parting may be good at last.
 To the brief span of days which yet remain,
 And to my death thy hand in love extend,
 For, save in thee, I have nor hope, nor friend.

SONNET LXXXVII.

He owes his own salvation to the virtuous conduct of Laura.

WELCOME severities, repulses kind,
 Which pity and chaste love did ever fill;
 Graceful contempts which (now their use I find)
 Temper'd my foolish and excited will;
 Gentle discourse, in union bright where shin'd
 With highest courtesy all honour still;
 Fountain of beauty, flow'r of virtue join'd,
 Which in my heart each base thought knew to kill:
 Glances divine, to man with blessings rife,
 Now proud—aspiring passion to control
 Which dar'd to seek what justly was denied—
 And ready now to comfort my frail life:
 Such sweet variety was to my soul
 Root of its health which else had surely died.

SONNET LXXXVIII.

He tells the shade of Laura the loss that the world sustained in her departure.

O BLESSED Spirit! who those sun-like eyes
 So sweetly didst inform and brightly fill,
 Who the apt words didst frame and tender sighs
 Which in my fond heart have their echo still:
 Erewhile I saw thee, glowing with chaste flame,
 Thy feet 'mid violets and verdure set,
 Moving in angel not in mortal frame,
 Life-like and light, before me present yet!
 Her, when returning with thy God to dwell,
 Thou didst relinquish and that fair veil given
 For purpose high by fortune's grace to thee:
 Love at thy parting bade the world farewell;
 Courtesy died; the Sun abandon'd Heaven,
 And Death himself our best friend 'gan to be.

SONNET LXXXIX.

Dialogue with Love on the right mode of celebrating Laura.

AH! Love some succour to my weak mind deign,
 Lend to my frail and weary style thine aid,
 To sing of her who is immortal made,
 A citizen of the celestial reign.
 And grant, lord, that my verse the height may gain
 Of her great praises, else in vain essay'd,
 Whose peer in worth or beauty never stay'd
 In this our world, unworthy to retain.
 Love answers: *In myself and Heav'n what lay,
 By conversation pure and counsel wise,
 All was in her whom Death has snatcht away.*
*Since the first morn when Adam op'd his eyes,
 Like form was ne'er—suffice it this to say,
 Write down with tears what scarce I tell for sighs.*

SONNET XC.

The sad song of a bird recalls to him his own sharper sorrows.

SWEET bird! who pourest thy lone loving lay
 That wails of your past pleasant time the flight,
 Or sees near winter and the gath'ring night,
 The failing daylight and departed May,
 If, as in yours its own sharp losses prey,
 My heart's like state were open to your sight,
 Then would'st thou on this aching bosom light,
 To mix our griefs and share life's darken'd way.
 Haply e'en then our lots unequal were;
 She whom thy love laments is still in life;
 Mine greedy Death and hostile Heav'n have taken.
 But the sad season and the hours less fair,
 Past years with sweet and bitter memories rife,
 With thee to parley all my pity waken.

CANZONE VIII.

To the Virgin Mary.

BEAUTIFUL Virgin! clothed with the sun,
 Crown'd with the stars, who so the Eternal Sun
 Well pleasedst that in thine his light he hid;
 Love pricks me on to utter speech of thee,
 And—feeble to commence without thy aid—
 Of Him who on thy bosom rests in love.
 Her I invoke who gracious still replies
 To all who ask in faith,
 Virgin! if ever yet
 The misery of man and mortal things
 To mercy mov'd thee, to my prayer incline;
 Help me in this my strife,
 Tho' I am but of dust, and thou Heaven's radiant Queen!

Wise Virgin! of that lovely number one
Of virgins blest and wise,
Even the first and with the brightest lamp:
O solid buckler of afflicted hearts!
'Neath which against the blows of Fate and Death,
Not mere deliverance but great victory is;
Relief from the blind ardour which consumes
Vain mortals here below!
Virgin! those lustrous eyes,
Which tearfully beheld the cruel prints
In the fair limbs of thy beloved Son,
Ah! turn on my sad doubt,
Who friendless, helpless thus, for counsel come to thee!

O Virgin! pure and perfect in each part,
Maiden or Mother, from thy honour'd birth,
This life to lighten and the next adorn;
O bright and lofty gate of open'd Heaven!
By thee, thy Son and His, the Almighty Sire,
In our worst need to save us came below:
And, from amid all other earthly seats,
Thou only wert elect,
Virgin supremely blest!
The tears of Eve who turnedst into joy;
Make me, thou canst, yet worthy of his grace,
O happy without end,
Who art in highest heaven a saint immortal shrin'd!

O holy Virgin! full of every good,
Who, in humility most deep and true,
To Heaven art mounted, thence my pray'rs to hear,
That fountain thou of pity didst produce,
That sun of justice light, which calms and clears
Our age, else clogg'd with errors dark and foul.
Three sweet and precious names in thee combine,
Of mother, daughter, wife,
Virgin! with glory crown'd,

Queen of that King who has unloos'd our bonds,
And free and happy made the world again,
By whose most sacred wounds,
I pray my heart to fix where true joys only are!

Virgin! of all unparallel'd, alone,
Who with thy beauties hast enamour'd Heaven,
Whose like has never been, nor e'er shall be;
For holy thoughts with chaste and pious acts
To the true God a sacred living shrine
In thy fecund virginity have made:
By thee, dear Mary, yet my life may be
Happy, if to thy pray'rs
O Virgin meek and mild!
Where sin abounded grace shall more abound:
With bended knee and broken heart I pray
That thou my guide wouldst be,
And to such prosperous end direct my faltering way!

Bright Virgin! and immutable as bright,
O'er life's tempestuous ocean the sure star
Each trusting mariner that truly guides,
Look down, and see amid this dreadful storm
How I am tost at random and alone,
And how already my last shriek is near,
Yet still in thee, sinful although and vile,
My soul keeps all her trust;
Virgin! I thee implore
Let not thy foe have triumph in my fall;
Remember that our sin made God himself,
To free us from its chain,
Within thy virgin womb our image on him take!

Virgin! what tears already have I shed,
Cherish'd what dreams and breath'd what pray'rs in vain,
But for my own worse penance and sure loss;
Since first on Arno's shore I saw the light

Till now, whate'er I sought, wherever turn'd,
My life has pass'd in torment and in tears,
For mortal loveliness in air, act, speech,
Has seiz'd and soil'd my soul:
O Virgin! pure and good,
Delay not till I reach my life's last year;
Swifter than shaft and shuttle are, my days
'Mid misery and sin
Have vanish'd all, and now Death only is behind!

Virgin! She now is dust, who, living, held
My heart in grief, and plung'd it since in gloom;
She knew not of my many ills this one,
And had she known, what since befel me still
Had been the same, for every other wish
Was death to me and ill renown for her;
But, Queen of Heaven, our Goddess—if to thee
Such homage be not sin—
Virgin! of matchless mind,
Thou knowest now the whole; and that, which else
No other can, is nought to thy great pow'r:
Deign then my grief to end,
Thus honour shall be thine, and safe my peace at last!

Virgin! in whom I fix my every hope,
Who canst and will'st assist me in great need,
Forsake me not in this my worst extreme,
Regard not me but Him who made me thus;
Let his high image stamp'd on my poor worth
Towards one so low and lost thy pity move:
Medusa spells have made me as a rock
Distilling a vain flood;
Virgin! my harass'd heart
With pure and pious tears do thou fulfil,
That its last sigh at least may be devout,
And free from earthly taint,
As was my earliest vow ere madness fill'd my veins!

Virgin! benevolent, and foe of pride,
Ah! let the love of our one Author win,
Some mercy for a contrite humble heart:
For, if her poor frail mortal dust I lov'd
With loyalty so wonderful and long,
Much more my faith and gratitude for thee.
From this my present sad and sunken state
If by thy help I rise,
Virgin! to thy dear name
I consecrate and cleanse my thoughts, speech, pen,
My mind, and heart with all its tears and sighs;
Point then that better path,
And with complacence view my chang'd desires at last.

The day must come, nor distant far its date,
Time flies so swift and sure,
O peerless and alone!
When death my heart, now conscience struck, shall seize:
Commend me, Virgin! then to thy dear Son,
True God and Very Man,
That my last sigh in peace may, in His arms, be breath'd!

THE TRIUMPH OF DEATH.

PART I.

WHEN she, that graceful and illustrious Dame,
So late a pillar bright of rarest worth,
But now a naked spirit, in vile earth
Too early laid! return'd, in joy and fame,
From the fierce strife, where—with no other arms
Than her own virtuous heart and modest charms,
Her thoughts all innocent and speech where shone
Wisdom with truth—the tyrant was o'erthrown
Whose wiles and witchery the whole world subdue;
Great marvel was it then, I ween, to view,
Girt by his living slaves and victims dead,
Love, in her train, disarm'd and captive led.
Returning from her noble victory there,
That beauteous Lady and her comrades fair
Gently advancing in a bright group came:
Few were they, for on earth few seek true fame,
Yet, each and all, fit themes they seem'd to give
In poets' lay or history's page to live.
Their conquering ensign to the view reveal'd
A spotless ermine on a verdant field,
Its soft neck bound with gems and finest gold.
Scarce human seem'd to hear and to behold
Their speech so holy and their angel gait:
Blessed is he whose birth secures such fate!
Bright stars they seem'd, she, in the midst, a sun
Adorning all yet taking light from none;
With violets and roses garlanded,
In modest dignity of well-won fame

That joyful company right onward came;
When lo! obscure and dismal, overhead
A banner rose, and, clad in sable vest,
A terrible spectre, on whose grisly brow
A stern insatiate fury was imprest,

Stood forth, and hoarsely spake: "Lady! who now
Walkest in pride of youth, in beauty rife,
Ignorant of the bounds which limit life,
I am that pow'r, who cruel and unkind
Am call'd by mortals a weak race and blind,
Whose brief day vanishes ere night be come:
Mine was the voice beneath whose with'ring doom
Greece and proud Ilium fell, and mine the blade
Which low in dust the Roman glory laid:
All climes and every age my sway confess;
Arriving ever when expected less,
My frowns a thousand sanguine schemes destroy;
And now to you, when life has most of joy,
My course I bend, ere, changing as she will,
Fortune some bitter in your sweet distil."

Calmly that peerless Lady thus replied:
"Well know I these your utmost hate have tried;
O'er them you have no pow'r, little o'er me,
Yours is my body, but my soul is free,
Nor grieve I for myself, but that the blow
To me tho' welcome lays another low."

As one who, bent in curious wonder o'er
Some form late-found and never seen before,
Long doubtful stands, yet seems his doubt to blame,
So stood the fiend; addressing then the Dame,
Slow he resum'd, with countenance more bland
And gentler tone, "I recollect them well
And when beneath my poison-tooth they fell:
But you, the leader of this lovely band,

Who ne'er hast felt my blighting bitter sting,
 I could compel, yet as a friend I bring
 To you my counsel; better will it be
 Old age and all its many ills to flee:
 An honour, which I am not wont to pay,
 For you I destine, that, from life, your soul
 Fearless and without pain shall pass away."
 —"As pleases Him whose pleasure rules the whole,
 Whom earth, sea, sky their Lord and Maker own,
 To me, as unto all, His holy will be done."

Thus spoke she: when behold! from every side
 Myriads of spirits o'er that boundless plain
 Suddenly rose, in numbers which defied
 The eye to measure or the mind retain.
 From India, Spain, Morocco, and Catay,
 The dead, in nations gather'd. Here were they
 Who, upon earth, were happy call'd by men,
 Pontiffs, and potentates, and princes then,
 Wretched and suppliant now, alone and bare;
 Where now their riches? where their honours high?
 Their mitres and their robes of purple die,
 Their gems and slaves, their crowns and sceptres where?
 Wretched are they in mortal things who trust!
 Yet all will trust therein, and it is just
 That disappointment should from folly flow,
 What boots it, O ye blind, to labour so?
 Soon must ye mingle with the dust ye tread,
 And scarce upon your tombs a name be read.
 Show me one fruit of all your boasted toil,
 But one which is not vanity and guile;
 Who counts or cares what objects you pursue
 Whom profits it vast nations to subdue,
 Kingdoms to overrun and empires shake,
 Spurr'd on by passions which your ruin make?

Fulfil each perilous and vain desire!
Glory and gain with loss of blood acquire!
Water and bread are sweeter yet than these,
And more the beechen cup than gems and gold can
please.

No further to pursue a theme so long,
Return we to the old aim of our song.

Already to its final moments drew
That life so glorious yet so brief, and near
The dark and doubtful pass of mortal fear,
The while a second band around her grew
Of many friends, in anxious love intent,
To see if Death would but for once relent;
Or, haply, trammel'd yet in mortal frame,
In hers to contemplate the coming end,
(To which all human flesh must one day wend)
And learn from her to die, their fair group came;
Struck with mute awe while Death from that dear head
Rear'd his rude hand, to snatch the golden thread.

Thus cropp'd he of the world the sweetest flow'r,
Cropp'd, not in hatred, but to prove his pow'r
E'en there could reach where Earth was likest Heaven.
Ah then! by all what bitter sighs were given,
What countless tears, those bright eyes being dimm'd,
Which long in heart and verse I lov'd and hymn'd:
She only 'mid that sorrow-storm the while,
Lay with a silent joy and peaceful smile,
As if the fruit of her fair life were won;
"Depart in peace," their sad dirge thus begun,
"Mortal divine"—and such she was indeed,
But nought it sav'd her from the blow decreed—
"If by chill ague thus and fever's heat,
Death conquer'd her what grace shall others meet?

Alas, for human hope so blind and brief!"

The tears which o'er that parting angel fell,
 The groans which then arose of love and grief,
 Who saw and heard alone may truly tell.
 The hour was morn, the day an April day,
 Its sixth, which show'd her first now snatch'd away.
 My bliss to bane thus cruel fortune turn'd!
 No wretch at slavery or at death e'er mourn'd
 As I to find my freedom so restor'd,
 And my life left me when I most abhor'd.
 Due to the world it was, to my ripe age,
 Me first to take who longest trod the earth,
 And yet a little spare its noblest birth.
 Language so fails our infinite loss to guage,
 Scarce dare I think of it, unless in verse
 Some Muse my grief yet fire me to rehearse.
 "Virtue and Beauty, Courtesy is dead,"
 (The lovely ladies circling her chaste bed
 Mournfully spoke) "what now our fates shall be?
 Who now in woman shall perfection see?
 Where now a mind so rich in wisdom meet,
 Of angel music where a voice so sweet?"

But now her spirit leaving its fair shell,
 With all the virtues there that lov'd to dwell,
 Made, where they clust'ring soar'd, the Heaven serene:
 No horrid fiend, that haunts the bed of death,
 Waited with chuckling scorn or gloomy mien
 Ere struck the mortal blow, and pass'd the latest breath:
 But, every vain fear hush'd, and fond lament,
 Each stood, intent upon that face so fair,
 Sure of distress and silent in despair.
 Not as a flame which suddenly is spent,
 But one that gently finds its natural close,
 To heaven in peace her willing spirit rose:
 As, nutriment denied, a lovely light,
 By fine gradations failing, less, less bright,

E'en to the last gives forth a lambent glow;
Not pale, but fairer than the virgin snow,
Falling, when winds are laid, on earth's green breast,
She seem'd a saint from life's vain toils at rest.
As if a sweet sleep o'er those bright eyes came
Her spirit mounted to the throne of Grace!
If this what, in our folly, Death we name,
Then Death seem'd lovely on that lovely face.

PART II.

THE night—that follow'd the disastrous blow
Which my spent sun remov'd in heaven to glow,
And left me here a blind and desolate man—
Now far advanc'd, to spread o'er earth began
The sweet spring-dew which harbingers the dawn,
When slumber's veil and visions are withdrawn:
When, crown'd with oriental gems, and bright
As new-born day, upon my tranced sight
My Lady lighted from her starry sphere:
With kind speech and soft sigh, her hand so dear,
So long desir'd in vain, to mine she prest,
While heavenly sweetness instant warm'd my breast:
“Remember her, who, from the world apart,
Kept all your course since known to that young heart.”
Pensive she spoke, with mild and modest air
Seating me by her, on a soft bank, where,
In greenest shade, the beech and laurel met,
“Remember? ah! how should I e'er forget!
Yet tell me, idol mine,” in tears I said,
“Live you, or, dreamt I, is, is Laura dead?”
“Live I? I only live, but you indeed
Are dead, and must be, till the last best hour
Shall free you from the flesh and vile world's pow'r.
But, our brief leisure lest desire exceed,

Turn we, ere breaks the day already nigh
To themes of greater interest pure and high."

Then I: "When ended the brief dream and vain
That men call life, by you now safely past,
Is death indeed such punishment and pain?"

Replied she: "While on earth your lot is cast,
Slave to the world's opinions blind and hard,
True happiness shall ne'er your search reward;
Death to the good a dreary prison opes,
But to the vile and base, who all their hopes
And cares below have fix'd, is full of fear;
And this my loss, now mourn'd with many a tear,
Would seem a gain, and, knew you my delight
Boundless and pure, your joyful praise excite."

Thus spoke she, and on heaven her grateful eye
Devoutly fix'd, but while her roselips lie
Chain'd in cold silence, I renew'd my theme:

"Lightning and storm, red battle, age, disease,
Racks, prisons, poison, famine, make not these
Death, even to the bravest, bitter seem?"

She answer'd: "I deny not that the strife
Is great and sore which waits on parting life,
And then of death eternal the sharp dread!
But if the soul with hope from Heaven be fed,
And haply in itself the heart have grief,
What then is death? Its brief sigh brings relief:
Already I approach'd my final goal,
My strength was failing, on the wing my soul,
When thus a low sad whisper by my side,
O miserable who, to vain life tied,
Counts every hour and deems each hour a day,
By land or ocean, to himself a prey,
Where'er he wanders who one form pursues,
Indulges one desire, one dream renews,

Thought, speech, sense, feeling, there for ever bound!
It ceased, and to the spot whence came the sound
I turned my languid eyes, and her beheld,
Your love who checked, my pity who impell'd;
I recognised her by that voice and air,

So often which had chased my spirit's gloom,
Now calm and wise, as courteous then and fair.

But ev'n to you when dearest, in the bloom
Of joyous youth and beauty's rosy prime,
Theme of much thought and muse of many a rhyme,
Believe me, life to me was far less sweet
Than thus a merciful mild death to meet
The blessed hope, to mortals rarely given:
And such joy smooth'd my path from earth to heaven,
As from long exile to sweet home I turn'd,
While but for you alone my soul with pity yearn'd."

"But tell me, Lady," said I, "by that true,
And loyal faith, on earth well known to you,
Now better known before the Omniscient's face,
If in your breast the thought e'er found a place
Love prompted, my long martyrdom to cheer,
Though virtue followed still her fair emprise.

For ah! oft written in those sweetest eyes
Dear anger, dear disdain, and pardon dear,
Long o'er my wishes doubts and shadow cast."
Scarce from my lips the venturous speech had past,
When o'er her fair face its old sun-smile beamed,
My sinking virtue which so oft redeemed,
And with a tender sigh she answered: "Never
Can or did aught from you my firm heart sever
But as, to our young fame, no other way,
Direct and plain of mutual safety lay,
I temper'd with cold looks your raging flame:
So fondest mothers wayward children tame.

How often have I said it me behoves
 To act discreetly, for he burns not loves!
 Who hopes and fears, ill plays discretion's part!
 He must not in my face detect my heart;
 'Twas this, which, as a rein the generous horse
 Slack'd your hot haste and shap'd your proper course.
 Often, while love my struggling heart consum'd,
 Has anger ting'd my cheek, my eyes illum'd,
 For love in me could reason ne'er subdue;
 But ever if I saw you sorrow-spent,
 Instant my fondest looks on you were bent,
 Myself from shame, from death redeeming you;
 Or, if the flame of passion blazed too high,
 My greeting changed, with short speech and cold eye
 My sorrow moved you or my terror shook.
 That these the arts I used, the way I took
 Smiles varying scorn as sunshine follows rain,
 You know, and well have sung in many a deathless strain.
 Again and oft, as saw I sunk in grief
 Those tearful eyes, I said, without relief,
 Surely and swift he marches to his grave,
 And, at the thought, the fitting help I gave.
 But if I saw you wild and passion spurr'd,
 Prompt with the curb, your boldness I deterr'd,
 Thus cold and kind, pale, blushing, gloomy, gay,
 Safe have I led you thro' the dangerous way,
 And as my labour great my joy at last."
 Trembling, I answered, and my tears flowed fast,
 "Lady, could I the blessed thought believe,
 My faithful love would full reward receive."

"O man of little faith!"—her fairest cheek,
 Ev'n as she spoke, a warm blush 'gan to streak—
 "Why should I say it were it less than true?
 If you on earth were pleasant in my view

I need not ask; enough it pleased to see
The best love of that true heart fixed on me;
Well too your Genius pleas'd me, and the fame
Which, far and wide, it shower'd upon my name;
Your love had blame in its excess alone

And wanted prudence; while you sought to tell,
By act and air, what long I knew and well,
To the whole world your secret heart was shown;
Thence was the coldness which your hopes distress,
For such our sympathy in all the rest,
As is alone where love keeps honour's law.
Since in your bosom first its birth I saw,
One fire our heart has equally inflam'd,
Except that I conceal'd it, you proclaimed;
And louder as your cry for mercy swell'd,
Terror and shame my silence more compell'd,
That men my great desire should little think;

But ah! concealment makes not sorrow less,

Complaint embitters not the mind's distress,
Feeling with fiction cannot swell and shrink,
But surely then at least the veil was rais'd,
You only present when your verse I prais'd,
And whisp'ring sang, *Love dares not more to say*.
Yours was my heart tho' turn'd my eyes away;
Grieve you, as cruel, that their grace was such,
As kept the little gave the good and much;
Yet oft and openly as they withdrew,
Far oftener furtively they dwelt on you,
For pity thus, what prudence robb'd, return'd;
And ever so their tranquil lights had burn'd,
Save that I fear'd those dear and dangerous eyes
Might then the secret of my soul surprise.

But one thing more, that, ere our parley cease,

Memory many shrine my words, as treasures sweet,
And this our parting give your spirit peace.

In all things else my fortune was complete,

In this alone some cause had I to mourn
That first I saw the light in humble earth,
And still, in sooth, it grieves that I was born
Far from the flowery nest where you had birth;
Yet fair to me the land where your love blest;
Haply that heart, which I alone possess,
Elsewhere had others lov'd, myself unseen,
And I, now voic'd by fame, had there inglorious been."

"Ah, no!" I cried, "howe'er the spheres might roll,
Wherever born, immutable and whole,
In life, in death, my great love had been yours."
"Enough," she smil'd, "its fame for aye endures,
And all my own! but pleasure has such pow'r,
Too little have we reck'd the growing hour;
Behold! Aurora, from her golden bed,

Brings back the day to mortals, and the Sun
Already from the ocean lifts his head.

Alas! he warns me that, my mission done,
We here must part. If more remain to say,
Sweet friend! in speech be brief, as must my stay."

Then I: "This kindest converse makes to me
All sense of my long suffering light and sweet,
But Lady! for that now my life must be
Hateful and heavy, tell me, I entreat,
When, late or early, we again shall meet?"—
"If right I read the future, long must you
Without me walk the earth."

She spoke, and past from view.

NOTES.

SON. I.—This sonnet, though standing first in most editions, early and recent, of the Poet's works, is of unknown date, but certainly much later than many others which follow it, and probably—from its subject and its very expressions—even the last of those written during the life of Laura. It is more properly, and indeed this seems intended by Petrarch himself, the *ENVOI* than the *PROEM*. In the first tercet there is an evident allusion to Horace, 11 Epode—" *Hæu me! per urbem, nam pudet tanti mali, Fabula quanta fuit!*" The last line of this sonnet and the last of sonnet 43 in *Morte*, convey precisely the same sentiment.

SON. II.—Petrarch first saw Laura at the church of St. Claire, in Avignon, on Monday, 6th April, 1327. So says De Sade, but others place the first meeting elsewhere, supporting their opinion by quotations from his works. (See note to Sonnet iii.)

SON. III.—It has been rashly inferred from this Sonnet that Petrarch saw Laura for the first time on Good Friday, which would not agree with the date he has himself so precisely assigned. In 1327 Easter was not on the 8th but on the 12th April, so that Good Friday fell on the 10th of that month. The beginning of his love was thus on the Monday in Passion Week. A still grosser error has betrayed others, mistaking the obvious allusion of the second line to the supernatural darkness which attended the death of our Saviour, into believing that a solar eclipse took place upon their first interview, that is, at full moon!

The old commentators—whom it would be wrong altogether to reject, for they lived nearer to the traditions, and brought no partiality nor family interest to their researches, which is more than can be said of the Abbé de Sade, who should not be taken as a certain guide in everything—seem to prove from various passages of Petrarch that his first meeting with Laura was in the island, formed by the two arms of the Sorga, at the entrance of the valley of Vaudaise. They quote, among other passages (for some of which see the closing note to the 14th Canzone), in support of their opinion, the first quatrain of Sonnet clxiii.:

"L'aura serena che fra verdi fronde
Mormorando a farir nel volto viemme,
Fammi risovvenir quand 'Amor diemme
Le prime piaghe, sì dolci e profonde."

Also the close of Sonnet xxxvii. in *Morte*:

"Mira 'l gran sasso donde Sorga nasce
* * * * *
Ove giace 'l tuo albergo, e dove nacque
Il nostro amor, vo' ch' abbandoni e lasce,
Per non veder ne' tuoi quel ch'a te spiaoque."

The first quatrain of Sonnet civl.:

"Una candida cerva sopra l'erba
Verde m'apparve con duo corna d'oro
Tra due riviere all'ombra d'un alloro."

The three first lines of stanza 6 Sestina iii.:

"Ben debb'io perdonare a tutt' i venti
Per amor d'un che 'n mezzo di duo fiumi
Mi chiuse tra 'l bel verde e 'l dolce ghiaccio."

Also the three lines of 1st quatrain of Sonnet xx. in Morte:

"D'aspri colli mirando il dolce piano
Ove nacque colei ch' avendo in mano
Mio cor in sul fiorire e'n sul far frutto."

See also lines 9 and 10 of Sonnet xc., at page 85.

Those who would have us believe that the Poet first met Laura at Avignon, in the church of St. Claire, build upon the note said to have been written by Petrarch on a Virgil which they suppose to have belonged to him. The old commentators, however, deny the authenticity of this note, which, according to them, is not in the handwriting of Petrarch, and has been added by some strange hand.

De Sade does not allow that Laura lived at Cabrières (see the whole of Sonnet xx. in Morte), because her family belonged to Avignon. It is easy to reconcile the two traditions. At that epoch Avignon was the residence of the Popes. That small town scarcely sufficed for the accommodation of their Court and the foreigners whom it attracted. The principal inhabitants went to reside in the neighbouring towns and at their country-seats. Laura and her family had selected Cabrières, a village situate on the other side of the valley of Vaucluse, where was the house of Petrarch.

Son. IV. line 6.—St. Matthew, c. xiii. v. 35: "*things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.*" Line 12. By "*picciol borgo*" is meant Cabrières, the birthplace and home of Laura.

Son. V.—Petrarch in his poetry is too fond of playing on the name of LAURA, connecting it with *lauro* (the laurel), *l'auro* (gold), *l'aureo* (golden), *l'aura* (the wind), but perhaps this Sonnet is his gravest offence in that way. "The three syllables of the name of my country," said a Veronese, "prove that it alone beats the three best and most famous cities of Italy, VENICE, ROME, NAPLES." It may be taken as a general rule that all *conceitti*, of which little or nothing remains, in translating them into a foreign tongue, are bad.

Son. VII. line 1.—Petrarch elsewhere writes in Latin verse:

"Ventris amor, studiumque gulæ, somnusque, quiesque
Eas solent potior sacræ quam cura poesiæ."

Son. X. lines 3, 4.—The exact translation is: "whom the anger of Jove never yet turned from the right way by windy storms," alluding to a persecution by Pope Boniface (who was in the Guelph interest) of the house of Colonna, who were Ghibellines. The last line is after Horace: "*Excepto quod non simul eas, cætera latus.*"

SON. XIII.—Composed during one of his journeys from Avignon, which he has scarcely quitted when he repents having done so, and desires to return.

SON. XIV. line 10.—The image of our Saviour on the holy handkerchief of St. Veronica. Of such a pilgrimage and this most sacred relic Dante thus speaks in the *Vita Nuova*: "*In quel tempo che molta gente va a Roma per vedere quella imagine benedetta, la quale Gesù Cristo lasciò a noi per esempio della bellissima sua figura.*"

SON. XV. line 12.—The poets imagined the heart to have two doors, the one leading to pleasure, the other to pain. It is to this fiction that Petrarch alludes when here, and in various other passages (see Sonnet lxx. line 6; cxi. 11; cxvii. 12), he talks of the keys of Love.

SON. XVI.—The original has but two rhymes in the quatrains and two in the tercets, a peculiarity—not otherwise to be imitated—preserved in the translation.

SON. XVII. line 1.—Three classes are intended—the eagle which gazes fixedly on the sun; owls, bats, moles, which cannot sustain the broad light of day; butterflies, moths, midges, which fly towards and perish in the fire.

SON. XVIII.—It would seem that this must have been the first of Petrarch's amatory poetry, for he here accuses himself of not having yet sung the beauties of Laura. Line 10 is neither more nor less than Virgil: "*Incipit effari mediâque in voce resistit.*"

SON. XIX.—The Platonic philosophy supposes the soul of the lover to reside not in himself but in the object beloved, by whom if despised and driven away, as it cannot exist out of the body, and will not dwell with any but the one beloved, it must necessarily die. It requires all the beauties of style and the fine management of verse which distinguish the original, to reconcile one to the sight of that poor shuttlecock of a heart suspended in air, or tost to and fro between the poet and Laura, or the other Ladies who vainly wait their turn at the game.

SEST. I.—The Sestina, as, with a single exception, employed by Petrarch, is an unrhymed poem of six stanzas of six lines each, closed by a *terzet*, or demi-stanza of three lines. The terminations of the lines in each stanza are the same throughout, but their relative position is constantly varied. The first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth lines in each stanza, correspond as to terminations with the second, fourth, sixth, fifth, third, and first lines respectively of the following stanza. The demi-stanza includes in each of its three lines two of the same terminations: in the specimen before us we find, in the first line, the first and fifth terminations; in the second line, the third and fourth; and in the last line the sixth and second terminations; and these, to vary the sound, all differently placed, at unequal intervals. This peculiar structure of the Sestina has doubtlessly led to its general disuse in more modern Italian poetry; and to the English translator (whose language is comparatively poor in similar terminations, and the poetry of which does not admit of the same rhyme being used in different senses) it is only manageable with difficulty. Our version, however, preserves the form faithfully.

In the first stanza an allusion may be intended to verses 20 to 23 of Psalm civ. We shall have occasion to see that such scriptural references are frequent with Petrarch. In the 4th line of this stanza we have the "*accendit lumina vesper*" of Virgil; and, in the 1st and 2nd lines of stanza 2, an approach to his "*humentemque aurora polo dimoverat umbram.*" Stanzas 5, 6, De Sade has well observed, are not easily reconcilable with

the belief that Petrarch's passion for Laura was altogether pure and platonic. (See Sonnet lviii. lines 13, 14.)

CANZ. I.—This Ode, as a play of fancy, is ingenious and imaginative, but at times somewhat obscure. It has fine passages, but the metamorphoses which the poet relates of himself are too capricious, full of conceits, occasionally cold and far-fetched. By the power of love he supposes himself transformed successively into a laurel, as was Daphne; into a swan, as Cynos; into a rock, as Echo; into a fountain, as Byblis; and into a stag, as Actmon; and thus he gives us an allegorical history of the commencement and course of his passion. From the allusions in the last transformation, it is conjectured that Petrarch surprised Laura, on some occasion, when bathing in the fountain of Vaucluse.

In the following passages Petrarch seems indebted to his classical reading, or to his predecessor, Dante:

Stan. 1, line 4: "Minuuntur atræ carmine curæ."—Horace.

Stan. 3, line 6: "Segui allo spirito sua forma novella."—Purg. xxv.

Stan. 4, line 7: "Animus meminisse horret, luctuque refugit."—Virg.

Stan. 7, line 10: "Ch'assolver non si può chi non si pente

Nè pentire e volere insieme puossi,

Per la contradizion che nol consente."—Infern. xxvii.

SON. XX.—This is probably about the worst of Petrarch's Sonnets. Stramazzo sought to encourage him back to the cultivation of the Muses and the prosecution of other studies which the coldness of Laura had led him to abandon. In the 8th line we find an expression of Virgil: "*oleaque Minerva inventrix.*"

SON. XXI.—This and the succeeding Sonnet are said, in the Padua edition of Crescini, to have been written by Petrarch to celebrate the signal triumph obtained over himself by his younger brother Gherardo, who, in the same year when he lost the lady of his heart (alluded to in Sonnet xxiv.), entered into the Carthusian monastery of Montrieu. But Marsand and Leopardi consider them as addressed to Boccaccio, on his abandoning a life of intrigue and licence for one of virtue; and in support of the latter conjecture there seems to be some internal evidence in lines 9 and 10 of Sonnet xxii., which may probably be applied with more justice to Boccaccio than to the brother of Petrarch, of whose poetic talents no proof exists, and of which our poet himself has made no mention. The last tercet of this last Sonnet contains a close and striking reference to Matthew, c. xviii. v. 18, and Luke xv. v. 7.

SON. XXIII.—Is addressed to the Princes of Italy, or rather to one of them, probably Colonna. Petrarch proclaims his ardent desire that the Pope (John XXII.) should quit Avignon, and that the heads of Christendom should join in a crusade against the Mahomedans, and drive them from the regions made holy by the death of the common Redeemer. Philip of Valois, Emperor under the title of Charles, is intended in the first line.

CANZ. II.—This Ode is by De Sade supposed to be addressed to Jacopo Colonna, Bishop of Lombes, whom the poet invites to preach to the people of Italy that they should emulate other foreign nations, accompanying the newly-elected Emperor Charles in his projected crusade for the recovery of the Holy Land. In stanza 3, line 11, we trace the verse of Virgil: "*Quam varia linguis, habitu tam vestis et armis;*" as also in stanza 4, line 1: "*Jacet aggeribus niveis informis, et alta Terra gelu latet;*" in line 6, Lucan's phrase,

"*Haud urget lethi metus*," is seen. Stanza 6, line 6: "*Curules triumphos tres agi Dalmaticum, Actiacum, Alexandrinum*."—Suetonius.

CANZ. III.—On this Ode, which, in the original, is rhymed upon the Provençal model (the same terminations recurring at the same intervals in each stanza, or, in other words, the same lines rhyming in each stanza throughout), the criticism of Tassoni is apt and well deserved, which by-the-by it rarely is. "An obscure and disjointed Ode, which Petrarch would certainly have written in another and better manner, but for the obligation which he had undertaken of repeating in all the stanzas the same rhymes: a condition which increases the difficulty as it lessens the pleasure, by the distance at which the rhymes stand from each other." For the same reason, and not to introduce an unwarrantable novelty, our English version, although it follows the *measure* of its original, departs from it in abandoning any attempt at mere rhyme, to which both sense and sound must have been sacrificed.

SEST. II.—Our version fails to preserve the strict form of the Sestina, inasmuch as one varying termination is introduced. The remark in our note to the preceding Ode applies equally to this and to all similar compositions of the kind. Stanza 4, line 6: "*Boughs*" figuratively put for "*arms*," as is "*hair*" for "*leaves*."

SON. XXIV. line 10.—The three are Venus, Mercury, and the Moon. There is considerable similarity between some parts (see lines 1 to 4, 7 and 8) of this Sonnet and of Sonnet lxxv., after the death of Laura.

SON. XXVL.—The two stars are Venus and Calisto. The first quatrain describes the cause, the second gives the effect: the picture in the 5th and 6th lines is from Virgil:

"ceu fœmina primum,
Cui tolerare colo vitam tenuique Minerva,
Impositum cinerem et sopitos suscitât ignes."

SON. XXVII. line 5.—Horace: "*Bruna iners*;" line 14, metaphorically signifying that the arms of Laura, that is the branches of the laurel, a tree sacred to Apollo, would make a shade over her head. He had planted one by the side of a stream, to which in her walks she frequently resorted, and he implores the God to protect it.

CANZ. IV. line 1.—"*Com'è sottile, quel filo a cui s' attien la mia speranza*."—Dante.

SON. XXXIII.—This and the two following Sonnets (which have the same rhymes throughout), abounding in classical allusions, should have a Southey or Landor as their translator. In the 6th line are introduced the names of (Julius) Cæsar and Janus, from whom our months of July and January are so called. In the 8th line, Daphne, the beloved of Apollo, is meant; in the 10th we have the "*nautis infœustus Orion*" of Horace. Neptune and Juno in the 12th line signify the sea and air.

SON. XXXV.—The absence, described in lines 4 and 5, was occasioned by the sickness and, as appears from line 12, subsequent death of a friend.

SON. XXXVII.—In this and the following Sonnet Petrarch complains of Laura's mirror as his rival, because, by too frequently seeing her own beauties there, she grew enamoured of herself and neglected him.

CANZ. V.—This Ode contains a single most simple thought, and the several pictures of approaching night, with the successive examples of the aged female pilgrim, the ploughman, the shepherd, the sailor, the unyoked oxen, to whom it brings relief, with the painful contrast of his own constantly afflicted state, have a grace and elegance

which leave nothing to be desired. Stanza 2, line 3: "*Mayoresque cadunt altis de montibus umbræ*;" line 4: "*Avidus colonus*;" line 8: "*dapibus mensas onerabat inemptis*." Stanza 5, line 2: "*Aspice, aratra jugo referent suspensa juvenci*;" line 7: "*Heu! quid volui misero mihi*;" line 14: "*Curæ non ipsæ in morte relinquunt*." All these fine touches are Virgilian.

MAD. I.—By the lover of Diana, Actæon is meant.

CANZ. VI.—This Ode is, by some, supposed to be addressed to and in praise of Stephen Colonna the younger, on his having, with an inconsiderable force, obtained a great victory over the Ursini. De Sade, knowing the long and intimate friendship between Petrarch and the Colonnas, particularly with Stephen, similarly applies it to him, as composed in his honour, on the occasion of his receiving the dignity of Senator of Rome for the space of five years. Before the appearance, however, of De Sade's work, the general opinion—to which, from strong internal evidence, I must still adhere—was that this Ode was addressed to Cola di Rienzi, Tribune of the Romans, in 1347, when that celebrated character undertook to restore liberty to Rome and Italy.

Stanza 1, last line: "*L'avea già i capelli in mano avvolto*."—Dante, *Infern.* xxiii. Stanza 6, lines 1, 2. Under the symbols of various animals, borne in the arms of neighbouring States, and, apparently, in punning allusion to the names of the two powerful families of Ursini and Colonna, reference is here made to the contending factions which fomented civil dissension at Rome, and harassed Italy in general. By the Bear (*Orso*) are meant the Orsini, or Ursini, by the Wolf the Republic of Sienna, by the Eagle the Emperors, by the Lion the State of Venice, by the Snake the family of the Visconti, and by the Column (*Colonna*) that of the Colonna. Stanza 6, lines 1 to 3, seem an amplification of "*fors ingentibus ausis Rara comes*."—Statius.

SON. XLIII. lines 13, 14, seem to have Ovid in view:

"sed scilicet ultima semper
Expectanda dies homini, dicique beatus
Ante obitum nemo supremaque funera debet."

SON. XLIV. line 4.—Lucan has the phrase, "*Ocyor tigride feda*." Line 6 seems to be from Virgil: "*Et freta destituent nudos in littore pisces*."

SON. XLV.—Who the friend, and what the precise nature of the gifts, is not known. Commentators have occupied themselves to little profit on both questions. Their conjectures, particularly on the last, are irreconcilable with each other, and unsatisfactory in themselves.

BALL. IV. line 15.—See line 4, Sonnet lxx., and last line Sonnet cix.

SON. XLVIII.—This is one of several Sonnets written on or for the anniversary of his first meeting with Laura.

BAL. V. line 3.—"*Pigro animal*" should have been otherwise—in a coarser sense, perhaps—translated than it is here rendered; but, as the spirit of the somewhat grotesque allusion is sufficiently preserved, the maintenance of mere verbal correctness has not been considered of consequence.

SON. XLIX. line 14.—"*Ne sit in invisio vestra figura loco*."—Ovid.

SON. L. lines 13, 14.—"*Non ego, totus abesset amor, sed mutus esset, Orabam*."

SON. LI. line 2: "*scopulis illius reclamant Equora*."—Virgil.

CANZ. VII.—The concluding verses of the four first stanzas of this Ode are the commencing lines of so many other Canzoni, of which the first is by the Provencal Troubadour, Arnaut Daniell, the three next, by Guido Cavalcante, the great Dante, and Cino of Pistoia respectively—all Italian poets of celebrity, and friends of Petrarch—while the one with which the last stanza terminates is the first line of the first Ode of Petrarch himself.

CANZ. VIII.—This is the first of three successive Canzoni addressed to the eyes of Laura, and usually called "*the three Graces*." Without relying on the more easily won praises of ordinary readers, whether Italians or foreigners, we confine ourselves to the judgment given upon these compositions by the severest critic whom the poems of Petrarch have ever found, to wit TASSONI, who distinguishes them from among the other Odes as QUEENS, and hesitates not to assert that they alone suffice to entitle the Poet to his crown. Stanza 6, line 18: "*Extrema gaudii luctus occupat.*"

SON. LIII.—This and the following Sonnet seem to prove that the order of time is not preserved in the arrangement of these poems, and that they refer to a later period. (See note to Sonnet cxliii.)

SON. LIV.—Although the meaning of the closing lines may be somewhat doubtful, the correct rendering seems to be: "If, in praising you, Art reach not the requisite height, it is the fault of Love, who has made you more beautiful than Art can represent."

SON. LVII.—This and the next Sonnet relate to a portrait of Laura, which—unable to gaze upon her at his ease, and wishing at least to have her likeness—our poet commissioned Simon Memmi, of Sienna, a celebrated artist of the day, and a pupil of Giotto, to take for him.

SON. LVIII.—The last tercet has surely not received proper attention from those who incline to think that Petrarch's love was merely platonic. (See Sonnet xxii. in *Morte*, lines 7, 10, 14.)

SON. LIX.—In the original the word *mezzo* is used as a rhyme three times, always in a different sense. This would render difficult an English translation in the strict sonnet form; and as the character of the poem can be perhaps better preserved in our ordinary rhymed verse of ten syllables, I have adopted it accordingly.

SEST. IV.—Dr. Johnson is reported to have said that a ship was the worst of prisons, with the additional evil of having merely a plank between you and death. The original of this sentiment may be found in the third line of the first stanza of this Sestina: "*Scevro da morte con un picciol legno*;" or both may have taken it from a passage in Diogenes Laertius de Anacharsi: "*Quum didicisset quatuor digitos navis esse crassitudinem, tantum, inquit, morti propinqui sunt qui navigant.*"

SON. LX. lines 9, 10.—The references to Matthew, c. xi. v. 28, and in lines 12, 13 to Psalm iv. v. 6, need scarcely be pointed out.

SON. LXI. is said to have originated in the following circumstance. Laura meeting him one day in the streets of Avignon, cast upon him a kind look, and said, "Petrarch, you are tired of loving me."

SON. LXII. line 2, seems somewhat inconsistent with what he says of himself in Senil. lib. v. ep. 8: "My hair had grown grey before twenty-five, and I consoled myself for the defect by thinking that I shared it in common with many of the great men of

antiquity; for Cæsar and Virgil were grey-headed in youth." If such was his aspect then, he was scarce entitled when past forty to talk of time mixing by slow degrees the grey in his hair. (See Sonnet clixv., last line.)

SON. LXV. line 1.—It is doubtful whether the eyes of Laura are meant, or merely the windows at which she was commonly seen. Line 14. See Sonnet cix. line 14; Ode xix. stanza 6, line 9; Ode xx. stanza 5, line 18. See also note to Sonnet cxix.

SON. LXVI. line 18.—By "foes" are meant the eyes of Laura.

SON. LXIX.—Supposed to have been written in 1842, when Laura may be understood to have lost something of her early beauty. Some one, wondering at the doting passion of the Poet, had said that Laura was not deserving of so many tears and sighs, whereon Petrarch, describing her as she was when they first met fifteen years before, immediately sets himself to show that he had had every possible reason to be desperately in love with her. Sonnets cxii. cixxviii. seem to have arisen out of some similar occasion. Line 1: "*dederatque comas diffundere ventis*;" line 9: "*et vera incessu patuit Dea*;" lines 10, 11: "*nec vox hominem sonat*," are expressions of Virgil, in which seem to have originated the corresponding lines of Petrarch.

SON. LXXI.—Cino was a celebrated jurisconsult, and, in those days, a poet of considerable reputation, whom his fellow-citizens—therefore called perverse—had exiled from Pistoia, and who had retired to the neighbouring town of Castigliana.

SON. LXXII.—In the last line, "*nec lacrymis saturatur Amor*" of Virgil seems to have afforded one of the tints for this picture.

SON. LXXVII.—Addressed to Orso, Count of Anguillara, a relative of the Colonnas—he had married a sister of the Cardinal—unable, from illness, to rejoin their forces and share with them the fruits of battle and the palms of victory.

SON. LXXVIII.—Tassoni is of opinion that Boccaccio is addressed in this Sonnet. The exhortations of the monk Petroni, and the prayers of his friend Ciani, had previously made some impression on his heart towards effecting his final separation from his mistress. He further implores the advice of Petrarch, who replied to him that he ought not to delay a single instant in complying with their salutary counsels.

SON. LXXIX. line 18.—Virgil: "*hærent infixi pectore vultus Verbaque*."

SON. LXXXI.—As Cæsar disguised his joy, on receiving Pompey's head from Ptolemy, by tears, so the defeated Hannibal concealed his grief by affecting laughter when his weeping countrymen reluctantly paid the heavy fine imposed upon them as the purchase of peace with Rome. As to Cæsar, Lucan, Pharsal, b. ix., thus describes the scene:

"lacrymas non sponte cadentes
Effudit, gemitusque expressit pectore læto,
Non aliter manifesta putans abscondere menti."

As to Hannibal, the story is related in Livy, b. x. c. 44.

SON. LXXXII. line 1.—According to Lucius Florus, the day of Hannibal's victory at Cannæ would have also been the last of Rome had he only known how to push his fortune, and profit by his success. Line 7 is from Statius: "*laxatque genas et temperat ungues*."

SON. LXXXIV. line 7, shows the period when this was written. See note to Sonnet xciv.

SON. LXXXIX.—Milton may have had the lines (9 to 18) in view when describing (Par. Lost, xl. 817—822) the regret of Adam for the loss of the Divine Presence:

“Here I could frequent
With worship, place by place, where he vouchsaf’d
Presence divine, and to my sons relate
On this mount he appear’d, under this tree
Stood visible, among the pines his voice
I heard, here with him at the fountain talk’d.”

CANZ. XI.—In a former publication (ODES OF PETRARCH) I purposely forbore from attempting any translation of this Ode, which I conceived to be almost impracticable in English verse, and scarcely acceptable even in prose. The same reasons have operated on this occasion, in inducing me to withhold it from its proper place in the body of the present work: and it is solely from a wish to give to my labours a greater completeness, that I venture on including it among the notes. I must, however, premise its insertion by stating that to Italians themselves it is only partially intelligible, and that much difference of opinion has always existed among critics and commentators as to what its proper meaning and precise object are. Parts of it may be understood, but the parts quite fail to make up a whole: one line contradicts—or so seems—another, and how to connect it with what precedes or follows is indeed a sore puzzle. A knotted string of obscure proverbs! a smudged pallet of questionable colours! a doubtful experiment on difficult sounds! an inextricable labyrinth of discordant feelings and opinions! a fathomless abyss into which one may look for ever and see only its darkness! or if there be now and then a sort of connexion, a glimmer of light, it is pretty much the same as

“life in insects we dissect,
We lose it in the moment we detect.”

CANZONE XI.

“Nuts to Crack.”

Never more shall I sing, as I have sung:
For still she heeded not; and I was scorn’d:
So e’en in loveliest spots is trouble found.
Unceasingly to sigh is no relief.
Already on the Alp snow gathers round:
Already day is near; and I awake.
An affable and modest air is sweet;
And in a lovely lady that she be
Noble and dignified not proud and cold
Well pleases it to find.
Love o’er his empire rules without a sword.
He who has missed his way let him turn back;
Who has no home the heath must be his bed:
Who lost or has not gold,
Will sate his thirst at the clear crystal spring.

I trusted in Saint Peter, not so now;
 Let him who can my meaning understand.
 A harsh rule is a heavy weight to bear.
 I melt but where I must, and stand alone.
 I think of him who falling died in Po;
 Already thence the thrush has passed the brook;
 Come, see if I say sooth! No more for me.
 A rock amid the waters is no joke,
 Nor birdlime on the twig. Enough my grief
 When a superfluous pride
 In a fair Lady many virtues hides.
 There is who answereth without a call;
 There is who, tho' entreated, falls and flies:
 There is who melts 'neath ice:
 There is who day and night desires his death.

Love who loves you is an old proverb now.
 Well know I what I say. But let it pass;
 'Tis meet, at their own cost, that men should learn.
 A modest Lady wearies her best friend.
 Good signs are little known. To me it seems
 Wise to eschew things hazardous and high;
 In any country one may be at ease.
 Infinite hope below kills hope above;
 And I at times e'en thus have been the talk.
 My brief life that remains
 There is who'll spurn not if to him devote.
 I place my trust in him who rules the world,
 And who his followers shelters in the wood
 That with his pitying crook
 Me will he guide with his own flock to feed.

Haply not every one who reads discerns;
 Some set the snare at times who take no spoil;
 Who strains too much may break the bow in twain.
 Let not the law be lame when suitors watch.
 To be at ease we many a mile descend.
 To-day's great marvel is to-morrow's scorn.
 A veil'd and virgin loveliness is best.
 Blessed the key which pass'd within my heart,
 And, quick'ning my dull spirit, set it free
 From its old heavy chain,
 And from my bosom banish'd many a sigh.
 Where most I suffer'd once she suffers now;
 Her equal sorrows mitigate my grief;
 Thanks then to Love that I

Feel it no more, tho' he is still the same !
 In silence words that wary are and wise ;
 The voice which drives from me all other care ;
 And the dark prison which that fair light hides :
 As midnight on our hills the violets ;
 And the wild beasts within the walls who dwell ;
 The kind demeanour and the dear reserve ;
 And from two founts one stream which flow'd in peace
 Where I desire, collected where I would .
 Love and sore jealousy have seiz'd my heart,
 And the fair face whose guides
 Conduct me by a plainer shorter way
 To my one hope, where all my torments end.
 O treasur'd bliss, and all from thee which flows
 Of peace, of war, or truce,
 Never abandon me while life is left !

At my past loss I weep by turns and smile,
 Because my faith is fix'd in what I hear.
 The present I enjoy and better wait ;
 Silent, I count the years, yet crave their end,
 And in a lovely bough I nestle so
 That e'en her stern repulse I thank and praise,
 Which has at length o'ercome my firm desire,
 And inly shown me, I had been the talk,
 And pointed at by hand: all this it quench'd.
 So much am I urged on,
 Needs must I own, thou wert not bold enough.
 Who pierc'd me in my side she heals the wound,
 For whom in heart more than in ink I write ;
 Who quickens me or kills,
 And in one instant freezes me or fires.

SON. XCI. line 1.—So the Poet calls Avignon, where the Court of the Pope then was. (See Sonnets cv., cvi., cvii.) The two friends desired in the last tercet are Laura and Colonna. The concluding prayer that his foot may be firm as ever, may allude to his being confirmed in power, strengthened in heart, or—for some think that a fit of the gout, which the Cardinal laboured under, is meant—improved in health.

SON. XCII. line 1.—Petrarch and the sun are the two lovers. At a certain festival he was near her. Disturbed by the sun, she turned her look towards him ; he cannot contain his exultation, and describes the sun as hiding himself behind a cloud from jealousy at his own failure.

SON. XCIV. line 1.—The allusion is to the name of the valley—VALLIS CLAUSA, VALCHUSA, VAUGLUSE. By Babel, in line 4, is meant Avignon. (See Sonnet xci.)

SON. XCV.—This Sonnet seems to have been written in the sixteenth, and Sonnet xcvi. in the seventeenth year of his passion. (See Sonnet cxiii.)

CANZ. XII.—This Ode is allegorical: the two personages introduced are GLORY and VIRTUE. The date is supposed to be contemporaneous (1340) with that of the reception by Petrarch of the message of the Roman Senate inviting him to their city, to be there crowned as Laureat in the Capitol. It may be well to state the particulars of this compliment at greater length. Whilst walking in the orchard of his little hermitage at Vaucluse, on the morning of the 28rd August, 1340, a letter was brought to him from the Senate of Rome, announcing its determination to confer upon him the crown of Laureat, and inviting him to proceed to Italy for the purpose. To increase the glory of this triumph, the day had not passed before another messenger arrived from the Chancellor of the University of Paris, inviting him in its name to that city, where the honours of a public coronation also awaited his arrival. He hesitated as to which of these flattering deputations he ought to give the preference to. A patriotic feeling, joined to the advice of his friend the Cardinal Colonna, determined his choice in favour of Rome: and on the 8th April, 1341, it being Easter-day, he obtained the distinction he had so eagerly sought. Sennuccio del Bene acquaints us that Petrarch, in a velvet robe of violet colour, bound with a girdle of diamonds, was conveyed on a splendid car to the Capitol, and there, amidst the acclamations of an innumerable multitude, presented by the chief Senator with three crowns—of laurel, of ivy, and of myrtle.

SON. XCVI.—See note to Sonnet xcv. and Sonnet cxiii. Before Petrarch set out on his return from Naples, there was a report of his death in the north of Italy, and they even mourned for him at Venice as one actually dead. On this rumour Antonio de' Beccari composed an Ode, to which this Sonnet is a reply.

SON. XCVII. line 5.—“*Vulpem pilum mutare non mores.*”—Suetonius.

SON. XCVIII.—Composed in the spring of 1345, on quitting Avignon for Italy. Laura, on his taking leave of her, was, despite herself, overcome with sadness, grew quite pale, and seemed much affected. Line 18. There is a statuesque beauty about the original verse: “*E tacendo dicea, com' a me parve,*” which translation fails to reach.

CANZ. XIII.—This and the following Ode are known under the name of “*The Two fair Sisters,*” and are amongst the most admired of Petrarch's compositions.

CANZ. XIV.—The first stanza has been translated by Voltaire, quite after the French fashion: what is worse, he did not blush to tell the world that this Ode was written in unrhymed blank verse. His attempt is certainly a capital specimen of what is not translation, and as such I give it:

“Claire fontaine, onde aimable, onde pure,
 Ou la beauté, qui consume mon cœur,
 Seule beauté qui soit dans la nature,
 Des feux du jour évitait la chaleur;
 Arbre heureux dont le feuillage,
 Agité par les zéphyrs
 La couvrit de son ombrage,
 Qui rappelles mes soupirs
 En rappelant son image;
 Ornaments de ces bords, et filles du matin,
 Vous dont je suis jaloux, vous moins brillantes qu'elle,

Fleura, qu'elle embellissait quand vous touchiez son sein,
 Rossignol dont la voix est moins douce et moins belle,
 Air devenu plus pur, adorable séjour
 Immortalisé par ses charmes,
 Lieux dangereux et chers, ou de ses tendres armes
 L'Amour a blessé tous mes sens;
 Ecoutez mes derniers accents,
 Recevez mes dernières larmes."

Stanza 8, lines 4, 5. Commentators think from these verses that it was on the banks of the Sorga that Petrarch met Laura for the first time, and this opinion seems the most probable. To assert with De Sade that the valley of Vaucluse was not her resort, and the scene of their loves, is to gainsay almost all the verses of our poet. See Sonnet lii. in *Morte*:

"Sento l'aura mia antica; e i dolci colli
 Veggio apparir onde 'l bel lume nacque."

See also Sonnet xxxiii. of that part:

"Aria de 'misi sospir calda e serena,
 Dolce sentier che al amaro riesci,
 Colle che mi piacesti, or mi rincresci,
 Ov'ancor per usanza Amor mi mena."
 "Quinci vedea 'l mio bene," &c. &c.

Other passages might be quoted (see note to Sonnet iii.), all confirming the opinion that Petrarch and Laura lived in the neighbourhood of Vaucluse; indeed these very passages are what has served most to consecrate and render it celebrated. Stanza 4, line 6: "*Dentro una nuvola di fiori*."—Dante, *Purg.* xxx.

CANZ. XV. stanza 8, line 4.—The allusions are to the dress—a green robe brodered with violets—which Laura wore when she was first seen by Petrarch.

CANZ. XVI. stanza 2, lines 7, 8, 9.—"*Quæ te malam inquit, ratio, in istam spem induxit, ut eos tibi fideles putares fore, quos pecuniâ corrupisses*."—Cicero de *Offic.* He calls the mind of the Bavarian venal, because he had offered, at the Council of Trent, for 50,000 gold florins promised to him by the Ghibellines, to pass into Italy to the destruction of the Guelphs. Lines 10, 11. "*Quot servi, tot inimici*." Stanza 8, last line: so Plutarch in his life of *Marinus*: also *Lucius Florus*, "*Itaque tanto ardore pugnatum est, eaque cædes hostium fuit, ut victor Romanus de cruento flumine non plus aqua biberet quàm sanguinis barbarorum*."

SON. C. lines 5, 6, are borrowed from *Ovid*: "*Cura, dolorque, animi lagrimaque alimenta fuerunt*." The nature of the allusion in the last line is very doubtful.

SON. CL.—Lentino had described the ill-treatment received by him from his mistress, and asked advice how he should behave towards her; the reply of Petrarch exemplifies the old saying of "*one word for his friend, two for himself*," for it is clear that he quickly forgets the misfortunes of Lentino in thoughts of his own Laura.

SON. CIII. line 1.—"*He hath set me as a mark for his arrow*."—Lament, c. iii. v. 12.

CANZ. XVIII.—The poet endeavours in this Ode to show that the most wonderful

things in Nature, animate and inanimate, are but so many similes, such as of Petrarch self, instancing the Phoenix, the loadstone, an animal called by Pliny on enough, a (possibly also some allusion may be traced to the fable of Medusa), the Sun, another fountain in Epirus, and two other founts in the Fortunate West of but the personal application is as forced and involved as the comparisons areunge-fetched and pedantic.

SON. CV.—In this and the two following Sonnets Petrarch holds the language of the loftiest anger against the Court of Rome then at Avignon. These poems were condemned by it accordingly, and suppressed in all the printed editions of the Italian poems of our author. First tercet, Petrarch elsewhere writes, on the same subject, as follows:—"Spectat hæc Satan ridens, atque impari tripudio delectatus, interque decrepitos et puellas nudas, arbiter sedens, stupet plus illos agere quam se hortari: ac ne quis rebus torpor obrepat, ipse interim et seniles lumbos stimula incitat, et cæcum peregrinis follibus ignem ciet."—Epist. sine titulo.

SON. CVI. line 4.—The original, instead of their principal attributes and symbols, names the heathen Gods to whom these refer, namely, Jove, Pallas, Venus, and Bacchus.

SON. CVII. lines 12, 18.—Dante, *Infern.* xix.: "*Ahi, Costantin di quanto mal fu matre Non la tua conversion, ma quella dote Che da te prese il primo ricco patre.*" Milton has translated the tercets—his editors attribute the fragment to Dante—in another sense, and which may be the correct one, that if her ill-got wealth be thus dissipated in luxury, it could not again be replaced, for "Another Constantine comes not in haste."

SON. CVIII. lines 10 and 11.—The words "*slavery*" and "*liberty*" are, in the original, *Egypt* and *Jerusalem*, respectively. Line 12: "*Durum levius fit patientiâ.*"

SON. CXI.—She sought to persuade him that he was tenderly beloved, although the manners of Laura were cold and distant.

SON. CXIII.—"*Pone me pigris ubi nulla campis Arbor æstiva recreatur aura.*"—Horace. From the use of the word *tristure* in the last line of the original, we gather that this Sonnet dates from the fifteenth year of his passion, and is therefore anterior to Sonnets xcv. and xvi. (See clxxvii.)

SON. CXVI.—The first quatrain in the original contains the names of twenty-three rivers; the first line of the second quatrain particularises five kinds of trees. I have thought it best to condense the five lines into two.

SON. CXVII.—This is a dialogue between Petrarch and his heart. There seems, however, some confusion between the *alma* of the first verse and the *mente* of the twelfth: by the former we may understand the heart, by the latter the reason.

SON. CXIX.—In the first line, as making the sense clearer, I have adopted the alteration made by Petrarch on his original manuscript. The sentiment of the last line is much the same as that of the close of Sonnet lxx., of the last line but two of Ballata iv., and of the second line of the Chiusa of Ode xx.

SON. CXXII.—This and the three following Sonnets allude to some misfortune—commentators think the loss of one of her relatives or some friend—which had befallen Laura, the precise nature of which even De Sade was unable to determine. Petrarch, who had found her weeping, endeavours to console her.

I.—The last line recalls the "*Dulce ridentem Lalagen amabo Dulce*" Horace.

XVII. line 4.—I have taken Pope's line, but did not he take that of
1?

.. CXXVIII.—The frequent repetition of the interjectional O! to which much of beauty of the original is due, and which must be retained in any version that aims fidelity, has made it impossible (for me) to adhere to the sonnet form in my translation: and our blank verse is but a cold and meagre substitute for the fulness and flow of these fine lines.

SON. CXXIX.—In lines 10 and 11 a reference occurs to a custom which, it is said by the commentators, the ladies of Avignon long observed of bathing in the Rhone during the warm summer months. The idea of line 12 seems to be from Virgil's "*Invidio vobis, agri formosaque prata.*"

SON. CXXXI.—How beautiful and complete is the night scene in the fourth book of the *Æneid*, from which this Sonnet is evidently imitated:

"Nox erat: et placidum carpebant fessa soporem
Corpora per terras, silvæque et sæva quierant
Æquora: quum medio volvuntur sidera lapsu,
Quum tacet omnis ager, pecudes, pictæque volucres,
Quæque lacus late liquidos, quæque aspera dumis
Rura tenent, somno positæ sub nocte silenti
Lenibant curas, et corda oblita laborum."

SON. CXXXIII. line 4.—Verona was the country of Catullus, Mantua that of Virgil.

SON. CXXXV. line 8.—So Shakspeare, "*At soe 'twixt will and will not.*" Dante has the same expression: "*Che sì e no nel capo mi teneva.*"

SON. CXXXVI., CXXXVII.—Both Sonnets are on the same subject. He is in her company, by her side, and on the point, he thinks, of making known to her how time has rendered even more lively the flame of love which devours him, but a single glance of hers, charged with her usual austerity, stops the words on his lips. The passion which we are at leisure to describe may well be liable to suspicion as to its sincerity and strength.

SON. CXXXVIII. line 8: "*crimen placuisse putabit.*"—Ovid.

SON. CXL.—Tassoni, the principle of whose criticism seems to have been to make a joke—good or bad—of everything, ridicules the idea of lines 10 and 11 as ignoble and burlesque. Had he been an Englishman, he would, in the carping and captions spirit which too often actuates his remarks, have said that the repetitions "*fera stella,*" "*fera cuna,*" "*fera terra,*" "*fera donna,*" reminded him strongly of our own notable song:

"Cruel was the little bark that bore my love from me,
And cruel was the big ship that took him out to sea,
And cruel was her captain and cruel was the crew," &c. &c. &c.

Lines 12, 13.—The beautiful thought in Shenstone's epitaph on Miss Dolman, "*Quanto minus est cum reliquis versari quam tui meminisse,*" has, in all probability, this or some other similar (for there are several. See, for other proof, the two last lines of stanza 2,

Canzone viii., and the closing terzet of Sonnet xxviii. in *Morte*) expression of Petrarch for its prototype. In later writers, Byron, Campbell, and others, it is common enough, a waif, which any one may appropriate and impound.

SON. CXLIII.—Petrarch's letters show that this journey through the forest of Ardennes preceded many events recorded in poems which, by the order of their arrangement in print, are represented as of an earlier date.

SON. CXLVI.—In reply to a sonnet of Geri Gianfigliacci, he says that the true way to appease the anger and overcome the repugnance of a cruel fair is in endurance, and opposing to her flashing eyes a look of mingled humility and submission.

SON. CXLVII.—Avignon, with reference to the course of the Po, is in the west. He appears to have embarked at Parma with the view of proceeding to Verona. Line 12, Virgil uses the same expression to describe the same river (4 Georg. i. 871): *Et gemina auratus latorum cornua vultu Eridanus*.

SON. OL. line 12: "*varium et mutabile semper Fœmina*."—Virgil.

SON. CLII.—Laura had put on a new dress, her appearance in which so struck the Poet that he compares her to the Phoenix. Her tresses partly hanging down her neck, partly piled up on the head, as then usual in female coiffure, formed the ring and the diadem of gold attributed to the Phoenix. Tradition, or rather fable, placed the bird in Arabia, but Petrarch sees her in Provence. Pliny thus describes it: "*Auri fulgore circa colla, cætera purpureus, cæruleam roseis caudam pennis distinguuntibus*."

SON. CLIII. line 7.—Augustus died after fifty-six years of power, as Consul, Triumvir and Emperor; line 8, Agamemnon; line 9, Scipio.

SON. CLIV. lines 3, 4.—Cicero pro Archia. "*O fortunate, inquit, adolescens qui tua virtutis Homerum præconem invenieris*."

SON. CLV. lines 7, 9.—See Canzone v. stanza 2, line 8.

SON. CLVII.—In the Padua edition by Crescini, which attempts an arrangement of the Italian poems of Petrarch according to their probable chronological order, this appears as the last of the Sonnets written during the lifetime of Laura.

SON. CLVIII. lines 10, 11.—He alludes probably to the fable told by Solinus and Pliny, that the Astormi, a people without mouths, near the sources of the Ganges, keep themselves alive by smell alone. In the next line allusion is made to fishes and to the salamander. See Ode xx. stanza 4, line 2.

SON. CLXIII. lines 5, 6.—Atlas king of Mauritania is here meant.

SON. CLXVI.—This and the two following Sonnets are founded on the same circumstance. Petrarch met Laura at a public assembly in Avignon. She happened to drop one of her gloves, a silken one embroidered with gold, which Petrarch eagerly picked up. He would have wished to keep it, but Laura perceiving it in his hands, took it away from him—treatment of which he loudly complains.

SON. CLXXII. line 8: "*Elige cui dicas, tu mihi sola places*."—Ovid.

QANZ. XIX.—It having been reported to Laura that Petrarch had said that his poems were written in praise of some other lady and not of her, he repels the accusation in this Ode. Stanza 4, line 2. The opinion that the Salamander lived in fire was a fault of the times more than of the poet. Line 9. See notes to Stanzas 5, 6, Sestina i., and to Sonnet lviii.

CANZ. XX. stanza 5, line 6.—The fable of men without mouths, who live on the odour of wild fruits, is told by Solinus. See Sonnet clviii.

SON. CLXXIII.—By the ancient poets the Rhone was commonly called "the rapid," thus Claudius: "*Rhodanus velox*;" Silius: "*Rhodanusque celer*;" Lucan: "*Rhodanus velocibus undis*." By the word "*rodendo*," in line 2, allusion is made to a particular derivation of the name of the river from *rodere*. Moore's song, "*Flow on thou shining river*," &c. &c., has been said to owe something to the second quatrain of this Sonnet; but it appears to me that the resemblance is confined to the idea of a river, in each case being made the bearer of a message of love. Line 14, Matthew, c. xxvi. v. 41; Mark, c. xiv. v. 88.

SON. CLXXIV. lines 3, 8.—Goldsmith has the same thought in pretty much the same words: "*And drags at each remove a lengthening chain*."

SON. CLXXV.—See note to Sonnet cxxvii.

SON. CLXXVIII.—Some one seeing him "*over head and ears*" in love, judged that he was so through the mischievous influence of some witch, but he points out the true and only cause. See Sonnets lxi., cxii.

SEST. VI. stanza 1, line 1.—One day seems to be put here for an epoch in man's life, and each epoch being usually considered as embracing seven years, three such days would be twenty-one. In like manner, in line 2 of stanza 2, "*Il giorno avanti*," a day before, a day, or epoch less, is understood to apply to Laura. He was in his fourth, she in her third epoch, when they first met. Probably, the form of the Sestina could not have been preserved in this translation, except by employing, in several places, the terminations in varying senses, which, though warranted by the Italian model, differ from their more ordinary acceptation in our own language. In the first stanza the phrase *in parte* would rather signify *with a tendency*: in the demi-stanza it might more properly be rendered *separately*. *Pregio*, in the fifth stanza, means *virtue*; in the sixth, *praise*; and in the demi-stanza, *merit*.

SON. CLXXXIII. lines 5 to 7.—The story of Aurora and Tithonus is alluded to. (See Sonnet xxiii. in *Morte*.)

SON. CLXXXV.—See note to Sonnet cxxvii.

SON. CLXXXVI.—This is a dialogue between the Poet and certain fair companions of Laura, whom he met at an entertainment when she was not present. They are said to be accompanied, because they were many and together, and alone because she was not with them. The "*invidia*" and "*gelosia*" of the 7th line have been much commented on, but the right interpretation is far from clear. The 8th line is imitated from Horace: "*Invidus alterius robis macrescit opimis*."

SON. CLXXXVII. line 1: "*cum Præcipitem oceani rubre lavit æquore carrum*."—Virg. Georg. iii. Line 5: "I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear."—Gray.

SON. CLXXXVIII. line 8: "*tinctus viold pallor amantium*."—Horace.

SON. CLXXXIX.—Twelve ladies—thirteen with Laura—who constituted the Court of Love which then existed at Avignon, and to whose decision were referred all questions of love which daily arose among knights and ladies; De Sade gives their names. The immediate subject of this Sonnet is the water journey of these ladies in a boat on the Rhone, or on the Durance, and their return by land to Avignon in a carriage. Line 13. Automedon was the charioteer of Achilles, Tiphys the pilot of the Argos.

Son. CXC. line 1: The original, "*Passer mei solitario in alcum tetto*," is clearly traceable to Psalm. cii. v. 7. I have altered the expression without, I trust, materially affecting the sense. Line 9: The phrase may be found in several Latin writers. Virgil has, "*Consanguineus lethi sopor*." Cicero, I think, says, "*Mortis imago et simulacrum est somnus*." Some one, "*Mors simillima somno*." Socrates also uses the same simile, "*If death is like a profound sleep and rest without dreams*." Lines 12, 14:

"Invideo vobis agri: mea gaudia habetis

Et vobis nunc est mea qua fuit ante voluptas."—Virgil.

Son. CXCv.—Laura is attacked with a weakness of sight, at which Petrarch is deeply grieved. The subject is continued in Sonnet cxcvii.

Son. CXCvi. lines 12, 18: "*Ira furor brevis est*."—Horace. "*Ingentis iræ exipit furor est*."—Lucan.

Son. CXCvii. lines 3, 4: "*Dum spectant lassos oculi lachuntur et ipsi Multaque corporibus transitione nocent*."—Ovid.

Sest. VII. stanza 1, line 4: "*Quam multa in sylvis avium se millia condunt*." Stanza 4, lines 5, 6: "*Spargitur et lacrymis tellus sparguntur et arma*." Stanza 5, line 4: "*Tacite per amica silentia luna*," are all Virgilian expressions (Statius has "*medicæque silentia luna*," and Silius Italicus "*tacito sub lumine Phæben*"), in which seem to have originated the corresponding lines of Petrarch. Stanza 6, lines 5, 6: the sentiment and expression are both pretty much the same as in the sixth stanza of the first Sestina, and the same remark as was there made is equally applicable here.

Son. CCL.—He is filled with the most lively exultation, because Charles, Marquis of Moravia, chosen to be King of the Romans, in a public entertainment given to him by the city of Avignon, asked about Laura, desired to see her, and then, following the custom of France, to signify his opinion of her superiority to all other ladies present, kissed her eyes and brow.

Sest. VIII. stanza 5, line 5: "*Frigidus in pratis cantando rumpitur anguis*."—Virgil. Pliny also says, "*Serpentes ipsas incantari*." In the fourth stanza the attempt to preserve the strict form of the Sestina fails.

Son. CCvi.—Supposed to be in reply to a sonnet of Giovanni de' Dondi, who asked him what he should do to appease the agitations of his amorous passion.

Son. CCvii.—Sennuccio del Bene presents to Laura and to Petrarch two roses: the muse of our good Poet eagerly celebrates so joyful an event. It may well be questioned, from the expression "*duo minori*" in the fourth line, whether this Sonnet does not belong to a much earlier period than its position under so high a number indicates.

Son. CCviii.—If we credit what is told us in this and other Sonnets (ccx. to ccxiv. and ccxvi.), written about this epoch, Petrarch for some time foresaw the death of Laura. The presage was not unreasonable (for the pestilence was then raging in and near Avignon), and in a few months too truly verified. In these Sonnets he seems to forebode his coming bereavement, and to see her a victim to sickness and death.

Son. CCxv.—One does not hazard much in passing the opinion that the date of this Sonnet must have been anterior to that of the composition of some of those which have just preceded it. Indeed, there is nothing whatever in it which might not have been said

more suitably after any other previous absence, than on one which was followed so soon by the death of the object of all his love and laudation. To pass from Sonnets ccxiii., ccxiv., to the one under remark, and then from it to ccxvi., seems to me quite sufficient proof that ccxv. is misplaced. (See Sonnet ccxxvii.)

SON. CCXIX. line 12.—The one her face, the other her hand.

SON. CCXX.—He exults at the recollection of the day when Laura, less reserved and cold than her common custom, honoured him with looks of seeming sweetness, and indications of encouragement and comfort.

SON. CCXXI.—It vexes him that under the impulse of passion he must leave Vaucluse and revisit Avignon, where the luxury and licentiousness of the papal Court is highly discreditable to the successors of St. Peter. By the word *maire*, line 11, is meant the city of Avignon. The meaning of the three last lines of this Sonnet is very obscure. My version inclines to the opinion that Petrarch had been recently received by her more graciously than usual—had been admitted to some special favour.

SON. CCXXIV.—Several commentators assert, possibly from the words *madre mia* in the third line, that this Sonnet is the exposition of an argument between Laura and some other elder lady on the excellence of chastity. In any case there are two persons in the dialogue, the part of the second commencing with the third line. The Poet's object is certainly to celebrate virtue in the abstract, and particularly that holy modesty which rendered his most beautiful Laura so severe to himself.

SON. CCXXV. lines 9, 12.—It seems to me that Petrarch must here have had Ovid in his eye: "Et genus, et proavos, et quæ non fecimus ipsi Vix ea nostra voco."

CANZ. XXI.—This Ode is highly praised by Tassoni as a pattern for all compositions in similar style: Muratori also describes it as replete with majesty, noble sentiments and fine argument, and exquisitely representing the internal conflict in the breast of the Poet. The first thought counsels him to abandon the cares of love and to turn unto God; the second reminds him of the fame which he acquires by writing of Laura; and, as a third, arises the love he feels for her, from which he cannot free himself. The contrast of those thoughts and feelings keeps him agitated and in suspense, to that degree that he, perforce, concludes, "*Videò meliora proboque, deteriora sequor.*"

SON. CCXXVI. lines 10, 11.—"*Gutta cavat lapidem sæpe cadendo.*" "*Teritur rubigine mucro Ferreus, et parvo sæpe liquore silex.*"—Propertius.

Ugo Foscolo remarks on the last tercet, that "with these lines ends the poetry which he wrote during the life of Laura." So far only as that Sonnet ccxxvii. certainly, belongs to an earlier period, is the remark correct. But, from internal evidence, it seems to me clear that *this* Sonnet also is misplaced. The third line cannot mean a severity that *had* been of long continuance—more than twenty years; nor the fourth line, where a *future* tense is used, describe a full triumph in time *past*. Again, the language of the tercets is contrary to such an opinion. Its tendency is towards *future* hope more than to *former* suffering: an intention *to persevere* is expressed rather than an avowal of his *having long persevered* in vain.

SON. CCXXVII.—This is said to be in reply to a sonnet of Sennucio, wherein he informed Petrarch that the Cardinal Colonna desired to see him again, and internal evidence would seem to show that this is the case. We gather from it the state of

Petrarch's feelings after eighteen years of such painful languishment. From the 12th line of Sonnet cxxxvii. and the 8th line of Sonnet cxxxv., we find that they were both written in the twentieth year of his love: another proof is thus afforded that the order in which these poems appear even in the best editions is not chronologically correct. Whoever first arranged the manuscripts of Petrarch, in placing this Sonnet at the end of the poems written during the lifetime of Laura, gave but a poor proof either of his own taste and discernment or of his love for the fame of the Poet. It would have been better to close with Canzone xxi. But historic probability perhaps required that the Sonnets cxxi., cxxii., cxxiii., in which we see Petrarch, who had left Laura in an infirm state of health, tormented with bad dreams and ill omens, should terminate the first part.

AFTER THE DEATH OF LAURA.

SON. I. line 14.—"*Irrita ventosæ rapiabant verba procellæ.*"—Statius.

SON. II.—His eyes were still wet with tears for the death of Laura, which took place at Cabrières (see Sonnet xxxiii., page 218) on the morning of 6th April, 1848, on the same day and at the same hour when, twenty-one years before (1827), she had first met him, when (8d July) he lost his friend the Cardinal Colonna, his patron and protector for many years past. Both fell victims to the plague which ravaged Europe in that year.

CANZ. II. stanza 1, lines 9, 10.—"*Tu Superos, ipsumque Jovem, tu numina ponti, Victa domas, ipsumque regit qui numina ponti, Tartara quid cessant.*"—Ovid. Stanza 2, lines 5, 6, seem to be derived from Psalm xxiii. v. 2, and Psalm xlii. v. 1. Stanza 5, line 2, "*Ars casum simulat.*"—Ovid.

SON. III.—The twenty-one years of the second line is explained in the note to the previous Sonnet. From the 11th and 12th lines it would seem that he had barely escaped from a second similar passion by the death of its object. The idea, or rather its expression, seems scriptural, but I cannot immediately trace the passage referred to.

SON. VII. lines 13, 14.—A reference to Isaiah xxii. v. 22, and Matthew xvi. v. 19, will guide us to the origin of these lines.

SON. XV. line 3.—"*Ardens exeat ad æthera virtus.*"—Virgil.

SON. XVII. line 10.—"*Ignes pudici.*"—Statius.

SON. XIX. lines 3, 4: "*hi vivunt qui ex corporum vinculis tanquam e carcere evolverunt.*"—Cicero. Lines 5, 6: "*Candidus insuetum miratur limen Olympi, Sub pedibusque videt nubes et sydera Daphnis.*"

SON. XXII. lines 7, 10, 11.—We have here a confession made, after the death of its object, that his love was of the ordinary nature under similar circumstances, that its gratification would have involved personal guilt and moral death.

SON. XXIII.—Aurora obtained of the Gods immortality for her husband Tithonus, but she forgot to ask for him the perpetual youth necessary for the enjoyment of unlimited life.

SON. XXIV.—In the sixth line the beautiful expression "*E' l lampeggiar dell angelico riso*," seems traceable to Dante. Last line is from Job, c. xxx. v. 81.

SON. XXV. line 11.—Propertius. "*Non tantum ingenio quantum servire dolori*."

SON. XXVI. line 12.—Horace. "*Pulvis et umbra sumus*."

SON. XXXI.—This Sonnet is said to be an imitation of the lines of Statius, lib. ii. Sylv. 1, commencing "*O ubi purpureus suffusus sanguine candor*," &c. &c.

SON. XXXIII.—Written near Vauluse, or some spot commanding a view of its interesting environs.

SON. XXXVII.—The commentators are not agreed upon the precise meaning of the last lines of this Sonnet. In the place or in its inhabitants, possibly in her own family, something had happened, or was then passing, which might well grieve the spirit of his beloved, and he therefore prays her, for her own peace, to abandon it.

SON. XXXIX. line 8.—Virgil: "*Hec nihil invitis fas quemquam fidere Divis*."

SON. XLII.—The opening quatrain seems to have had in view the following of Virgil:

"Parturit almus ager, Zephyrique tepentibus auris
Laxant arva sinus."

Also of Lucretius:

"It ver, et Venus, et Veneris prænuntius ante
Pennatus graditur Zephyrus vestigia propter."

Love and Mirth are the keys alluded to in the 11th line (see note to Sonnet xv, p. 278).

SON. XLIII.—Evidently written in the spring. The beautiful lines of Virgil will readily occur, but I cannot refrain from giving them at full length:

"Qualis populeâ mærens Philomela sub umbrâ
Amisos queritur fætos, quos durus arator
Observans nido implumes detraxit: at illa
Flet noctem ramoque sedens miserabile carmen
Integrat et mæstis late loca questibus implet."

SON. XLVI. line 1.—Virgil: "*Agnovit longe gemitum præsaga mali mens*."

SON. XLVII. lines 13, 14.—See Proverbs xxiv. v. 84.

SON. LII.—Written on his return from Italy, in view of the birthplace of Laura.

CANZ. III. stanza 2, lines 11, 12.—Revelations, c. xviii. v. 17 and 18: "*For in one hour so great riches is come to nought*." "*For in one hour is she made desolate*."

Stanza 4, lines 1 to 5: Ovid, Met. b. ii. fab. 6:

"Fons erat, illimis, nitidis argenteus undis
Quem neque pastores, neque pastæ monte capellæ
Contigerant."

Stanza 6, lines 7, 8: "*Sed nunc atra caput tristi circumvolat umbrâ*."—Virgil. There is a poem by Edmund Spenser called, if I recollect rightly, "THE SIX VISIONS," which is little less than a paraphrase of this Ode.

CANZ. IV. stanza 2.—Throughout, the allegories are not easy of comprehension; the allusions, in the first two lines, are to the personal charms of Laura: by the alabaster walls, the delicate skin; by the roof of gold, the bright hair; by the ivory door, the fine teeth: and by the sapphire windows, the sparkling eyes of that lady are meant. Towards

the close of the stanza, the diamond throne and the crystal column are understood as figurative of the chastity and the purity of Laura. Stanza 4, line 6. One of the Fates is here meant.

SON. LVI. lines 12, 14:

"Si quid mea carmina possunt

Nulla dies unquam memori vos eximet svo."—Virgil.

SON. LVIII. line 8.—"Hæu mihi quam longe spem tulit aura meam."—Ovid.

CANZ. V. stanza 2, line 7.—The idea seems to be taken from the ancient form of surrendering oneself a prisoner in war: so Cicero, "*Cedo fortuna et manum attollo*."

SER. I. stanza 4, line 4.—"*Tanto è amara che poco è più morte*."—Dante, Inferno, l.

SON. LXIII. lines 12, 14.—I have not thought it necessary to adhere in these lines to the original, which, indeed, it would be very difficult to render into harmonious verse, but as the passage fixes the date of Laura's death, I may give it here: "*On the 6th April, at the first hour, in the year 1348, that blessed spirit departed from the body*."

SON. LXIV. lines 1, 2.—"*Forma bonum fragile est*."—Ovid. Lines 3, 4: "*Omnes in unam contulit laudes Deus, Talenque nasci fata voluerunt mihi*."—Seneca.

SON. LXVI.—There would have been little difficulty in giving to this poem, like the rest, a sonnet form; but partly for variety, as a break, principally because a literal translation of the second verse gave a fine and well sounding line, I have been seduced into letting the translation remain in our blank verse.

SON. LXVII. line 12.—St. John, c. xvii. v. 25.

SON. LXXII. lines 5, 6.—Dante, Purgatorio, xxiv., "*La mia sorella, che tra bella e buona Non so qual fosse più*."

SON. LXXVII. lines 9, 11.—Cicero, in the dialogue de Senectute, makes the elder Cato exclaim, "*O felicem et præclarum illum diem, quum ad illud divinorum animorum concilium proficiscar, et ex hac turbâ et colluvione discedam*."

SON. LXXX. line 1.—"*Mihi hæc lux toto jam longior anno est*."—Virgil.

CANZ. VI. Chiusa, last line.—"*Poi ella e' l' sonno aduna se n'andaro*."—Dante, Purg. ix. "*Post ea discedunt pariter somnusque deusque*."—Ovid.

CANZ. VII. stanza 2, line 9.—"*Plus aloës quam mellis habet*."—Juvenal. Stanza 7, lines 1 to 4.—Petrarch specially mentions "the great Atrides," "the haughty Achilles," and Hannibal, the bitter foe of Italy: he alludes also to Scipio, who was not always chaste and forbearing. The amours of the two first-named heroes are thus referred to by Horace: "*Atræi Atrides medio in triumpho Virgine raptâ*;" "*Præ insolentem Serva Briseis niveo colore Movit Achillem*." In the tenth line Petrarch also names Lucretia. These Greek and Roman words, however, are somewhat unmanageable in English verse, and I have thought it better to generalise the allusions.

SON. LXXXIII. line 3.—The expression is from Matthew vi. v. 20.

SON. LXXXV.—This would seem to be the latest of his Sonnets in point of date.

SON. LXXXVI. line 5.—See 1 Timothy, c. i. v. 17; line 9: "*Si in freto vicinus moriamur in porta*."—Seneca.

CANZ. VIII. stanza 1, line 1.—Revelations, c. xii. v. 1, 2. Stanza 2, lines 1 to 3: Matthew, c. xxv. Stanza 5, line 8: "*Unde nil majus generatur ipso Nec viget quicquam simile aut secundum*."—Horace. Line 10: Romans v. 20. In the many scriptural

and sacred allusions of this Ode there is a daring and yet a delicacy which it would be almost hopeless to endeavour to reproduce in rhyme: the attempt, therefore, has not been made, and the same consideration, perhaps, might have warranted entire abstinence from any translation.

TRIUMPH OF DEATH.—Part I. lines 166-7: "*Come di neve in alpe senza vento.*" Dante, *Infern.* xiv. Part II. line 6. Theocritus was of opinion that the dreams which came at dawn of day were more distinct than those of the night. Horace thought: "*Post mediam noctem visis cum somnia vera.*" Line 22: "*Vestra verò qua dicitur vita, mors est.*"—Cicero, *Sonn.* Scip. Line 42. In the original are given the names of some of the celebrated tyrants of antiquity, Sylla, Marius, Nero, Caligula, Mesentius: the parts and powers of the body, "*Fianchi, stomachi,*" are also introduced; and the diseases, "*febbri ardenti,*" to which it is liable, are alluded to. I have thought it better to omit all these particularities. Line 78. "*Nel veder di celi che tutto vede.*"—Dante, *Parad.* xxi.

ON THE CHARACTER OF OTHELLO.

"Othello must not be conceived as a negro, but a high and chivalrous Moorish Chief. Shakspeare learned the spirit of the character from the Spanish poetry which was prevalent in England in his time. Jealousy does not strike me as the point in his passion: I take it to be rather an agony that the creature whom he had believed angelic, in whom he had garnered up his heart, and whom he could not help still loving, should be proved impure and worthless. It was the struggle *not* to love her. It was a moral indignation and regret that virtue should so fall. But yet the *pity* of it, Iago! O, Iago! the pity of it, Iago! In addition to this his honour was concerned: Iago would not have succeeded, but by hinting that his honour was compromised. There is no ferocity in Othello; his mind is majestic and composed. He deliberately determines to die, and speaks his last speech with a view of showing his attachment to the Venetian state, though it had superseded him."

"I do not think there is any jealousy, properly so called, in the character of Othello. There is no predisposition to suspicion, which I take to be an essential term in the definition of the word. Desdemona very truly told Emilia that he was not jealous, that is, of a jealous habit, and he says so as truly of himself. Iago's suggestions you see are quite new to him; they do not correspond with anything of a like nature previously in his mind. If Desdemona had, in fact, been guilty, no one would have thought of calling Othello's conduct that of a jealous man. He could not act otherwise than he did with the lights he had; whereas jealousy can never be strictly right. See how utterly unlike Othello is to Leontes in the Winter's Tale, or even to Leonatus in Cymbeline. The jealousy of the first proceeds from an evident trifle, and something like hatred is mingled with it: and the conduct of Leonatus, in accepting the wager and exposing his wife to the trial, denotes a jealous temper already formed."

IN the above two extracts we have given the opinion of Coleridge as to the character of Othello. There may be other passages in which the same opinion is expressed, but we cannot

find them. Neither can we find, though we have heard that such exists, another opinion of that great poet and critic that the scope and tendency of the play of *Othello* was to illustrate the passion of jealousy, not in the Moor's, but in Iago's character. It does not, however, matter much, for we have already enough before us to show why we differ with both opinions, if both were given. That Iago is jealous we admit, and that he is, in various ways, injured. But the intent of the poet in his character seems to us to have been to exhibit the passion of revenge as operating upon an envious and discontented mind, an acute and active head, linked with a selfish and resolute heart, pursuing its way by any and every means to the desired satisfaction of those wrongs which he felt or fancied that the world and fortune had put upon him. But that *Othello* is not, as Coleridge contends, jealous, we are little inclined to admit. We cannot agree in this new-fangled idea, though it may elsewhere have become a favourite. It is one of those *ex cathedra* opinions which Coleridge, surrounded by admiring friends, was wont to give out so frequently, and sustain so well, while (though they often, we conceive, must have seen in those startling theories and strange fancies, proofs rather of the poetry of the speaker's mind than of the correctness of his reasoning, eloquent, impassioned, and comprehensive as it usually was) his auditors were content rather to listen in acquiescent silence than to contend in doubtful dispute. Coleridge in these matters seems to have occupied much the same position in modern literary society as did Johnson with his contemporaries. Each was proudly conscious of superiority of intellect and powers of conversation, and each too much delighted to employ his ingenuity in making the worse appear the better reason; this too, without any other desire to mislead, but in the heat of argument and the hope of victory against all odds, and unhappily without due advertence to the moral evil which undoubtedly flows from the dissemination of wrong, or crude opinions under the authority of great names. This evil was, perhaps, less in themselves than in their associates; the great

mass of whom were little able to cope and compete with them in any intellectual warfare, and who, impressed with a blind veneration for their every saying and doing, prompted the expression of those extreme opinions for the mere gratification of their personal curiosity, drawing out the lion by dogmatising on an admitted truism, or by hazarding a questionable sentiment, by misapprehending what was self-evident, by magnifying what was unimportant, and by diminishing or denying what was essentially great and true; by, in short, looking with other eyes, hearing with other ears, and speaking with other tongues than did their literary idol, as well on the common topics of the day as on the abstruser questions of philosophy or of politics. Occupied with the world, living and dying in the capital, constant opportunities were given to great numbers of eliciting these their singularities. What the ear heard the mind retained, not perhaps, however, fully and purely; and thus mixed up with what was intended to be separate, or to have merely an individual application, their opinions have come down to us strongly coloured, broadly stated, exhibiting, with very much of what is most valuable and certain, something of the trivial, obscure, and rash, the chaff with the grain, the bitter with the sweet, fact and fancy, wisdom and weakness. Whether such opinions may not be unfairly transmitted, and whether they are consonant with reason and experience, should *equally* be asked. For whatever they are, or whencesoever proceeding, the prestige and power of a great name may not be permitted to hide their real qualities and extent; nor lead us to pronounce as proved what is only plausible, to lose in mere splendour of expression the bulk and beauty of truth, the value of a moral in the glitter of an antithesis. Doubt, indeed, must be modestly exercised and respectfully expressed—for otherwise common minds may not sit in judgment on uncommon—but so often have our arms closed upon the shadow where they sought to clasp the substance, so often have we found the meteor and the marshlight where we hoped the sure and steady star, that it is not the swelling phrase, the pomp of words,

the parade of authorities, which now suffice to secure our uninquiring acceptance of a new creed or our abandonment of an old opinion. Coleridge says Othello is *not* jealous, and that he should not be so considered. What says Shakspeare? What intends *he* in Othello? And how is Othello thought of by the other persons of the play?

Before the Senate, in the public hearing of Venice, when Othello has just been gloriously acquitted of any improper practices in his courtship of Desdemona, when with her, hand in hand, he stands before the angry father and his upraised kindred, the husband of her free choice and acknowledged love, in that moment of triumph the first Senator addresses him in words which imply both advice and entreaty, and which are evidently used as indicative of his estimate of Othello's probable character:

"Adieu, brave Moor! use Desdemona well."

The touch is thoroughly Shakspearian—it is the commencing small light let in upon the scene, the first distant indication of the character to be subsequently worked out with such fearful truth and force.

Neither the possibility of making Othello suspicious of his wife nor the endeavour to make him so would have occurred to Iago except that he believed, from his previous knowledge of Othello's character, that evil doubts might easily be instilled and would probably take root. His object was revenge, to ensure which he naturally chose the plan which he deemed would most conduce to his success. His hate of the general is of old standing, and he watched an opportunity to satisfy it. He cogitates on his ways and means. He determines

"To abuse Othello's ear
That Cassio's too familiar with his wife;"

and from what does he derive his hope of success? from the credulous, pliant, impressible nature of his intended victim, who would

"As tenderly be led by the nose
As asses are."

This plan he pursues, confident that his very lowest success will be

" To put the Moor
At least into a jealousy so strong
That judgment cannot cure ;"

and that thus having displaced or destroyed Cassio he would

" Make the Moor thank him, love him, and reward him
For making him egregiously an ass."

Would he, we ask, have entertained these hopes, have formed this plan, but that he knew it to be at once the easiest and surest of accomplishment. The opportunity of bringing it into efficient execution does not, however, immediately occur. The preliminaries to success are not even established. But these are readily got together, and show Iago's great knowledge of mankind as derived from his observation of the habits and manners of those among whom he is placed. His leading of Roderigo where he will ; his knowledge of Cassio ; his practising upon the facility of the one and the infirmity of the other, at the very time and place where they might most serve his purpose, amid the quick bloods of Cyprus, the noble swelling spirits of a warlike colony, whom also he had already flustered with flowing cups ; the pre-arrangement of the contemporaneous watch in surety of that soldierly conviviality which a little art and exertion would so push into excess, that, amongst the flock of drunkards, he might then with ease put Cassio in some action that would offend the isle ; all these prove, at this early stage of the play, what its whole sequel affirms, his intimacy with the heart of man, that, as Othello describes, he did, indeed, know all qualities of human dealings with a learned spirit. No one denies this penetration and management in Iago. The inference we would draw from this general admission of his great tact is that it is not possible that he, who was everywhere else so skilled in choosing his tools and in working out his designs, would here select one whose nature, instead of affording him assistance in their prosecution, was positively the *antipodes* of that which he should have sought out. Iago knew his man much better : he knew that

his master's disposition *was* to jealousy inclined; not in itself, not without external cause, but easily to be acted on, and if that way wrought then "perplexed in the extreme." Othello himself confesses almost as much, and that he does not admit the whole is because he did not know himself rightly, not so well as did Iago. The beauty whom *each* of her rivals acknowledges as next in attraction to herself, as the *second* belle of the night, may safely be set down by others as entitled to the crown. With armies and with nations, or wherever individual competitors generally allow the claim of some one of their body to the second rank, depend upon it he deserves the first. So is it with the evidence to be deduced from personal confessions; the much that is admitted takes with it the little that is not directly acknowledged, or that is but indirectly denied. A next-to-all avowal justifies the belief of what is behind. And thus Othello's dying words prove, to us at least satisfactorily, the correctness of Iago's estimate of his character, and that but for the conviction of being enabled to pursue his revenge to a full and sure end, which that character held out, it would never have been so practised on by him.

Cassio, being ensnared and deposed from his office, at Iago's advice interests Desdemona in his behalf in order to obtain his restoration to the general's favour. Iago's intention is,

"While she for Cassio strongly pleads the Moor,
To pour this pestilence into his ear
That she repeals him for her love of him."

With this view he labours

"To draw the Moor apart
And bring him jump when he may Cassio find
Soliciting his wife."

But up to the scene when they are so found together, *not* a word is uttered by Iago expressive of any doubt entertained by him of either Desdemona or of Cassio. The first inoculation now takes place, and the disease, induced in its mildest form, is suppressed by Othello for a while, and *not* yet detected by Iago. In the brief commencing dialogue which occurs, so far as the latter is concerned, nothing is advanced against the wife the friend who are so soon to be victimised. The sole

symptoms of infection are in Othello himself, and these are but faint. The whole passage

Iago. Ha! I like not that.
Oth. What dost thou say?
Iago. Nothing, my lord: or if—I know not what.
Oth. Was not that Cassio which parted from my wife?
Iago. Cassio, my lord? No sure, I cannot think it,
 That he would steal away so guilty-like
 Seeing you coming.
Oth. I do believe 'twas he;”

contains only one shade illustrative of the character of the Moor. It is not that Cassio avoids him, or steals away as if himself guilty. *This* is not cared for. It was natural. It was expected. Cassio was still in disgrace. Cassio had offended, was guilty: that he should wear the pale look of sorrow or the blush of shame rather than the bold brow of ingratitude or the callous air of impenitence was all in his favour. But observe, as Othello observed; he noted and set down what none but a jealous man would, that Cassio “parted from his wife,” and Iago “liked not that.” It was this circumstance, alone, which to his eyes gave any significance to Cassio’s departure, any weight to the doubtful words which Iago first muttered, or to his subsequent slow replies. It dwells, however, in Othello’s memory, for he shortly refers to it as the first suspicion which he had imbibed, and as warranting him to demand from Iago the meaning of what followed:

“I heard thee say but now thou lik’dst not that
 When Cassio left my wife: what didst not like?”

Iago had not previously whispered any accusations against the one or the other. In their meeting, in its termination, there was nothing to excite displeasure or distrust; and no such feelings were so excited. It was Iago’s interjectional remark upon their separation which first kindles the sleeping fire. His suspicious nature exasperates him to self-reproach, not because there was any ground of objection, not because he himself fancied any such, but because another, a mere stander-by, had observed, or so pretended, something which he liked not, which he deemed objectionable. The whole affair is a trifle, on which

to build *his own* conclusions of any wrong inflicted upon or intended against his honour, would rightly stamp a man as jealous; but, in Othello's case, his earliest suspicions are founded upon the conclusions of another, conclusions which never occurred to himself, unless something of the sort is to be understood as working within him when he beseeches Desdemona

"To leave him but a little to himself."

This is not improbable, but, if therefore to be accepted, it tells rather against than for the Moor, as proving that the seeds of the disease were within himself, and not derived from any external agency. Silence and solitude were required by him that he might examine his own heart, and thus strive to put away from it the unworthy doubts regarding his wife which were already stealing upon him, and so soon to involve both in misery, ruin, and death.

Let any one read this scene, the third of Act 3, from the exit of Desdemona to her return, and then, be he husband or bachelor, ask himself whether it be possible, from what there occurs, to have so lighted the flames of jealousy in any breast *where the fuel had not been previously stored*. The most common questions are asked; the very asking them creates suspicion: the answers which are given are always fuller than necessary, inducing fresh inquiry: and when this, apparently against Othello's wish, terminates, the parts are changed: the questioner becomes the questioned; it is now no cautious fathoming, no shallow curiosity, no superficial conjecture, but direct frequent leading questions, which, however, draw forth nothing confirmatory of the growing suspicion they indicate, until the very impossibility of satisfying them, the difficulty even of understanding them causes a repetition, an echoing, a hesitation, which burst the last bounds within which Othello had till now suppressed the struggling torrent of his dark and terrible imaginings. As yet Cassio alone is mentioned: and what even he is suspected of, or with whom, has not appeared; even wherein the parley concerns him, Othello himself thinks

he is honest, and Iago dare be sworn he is so, beseeching his master not to depend too much upon his conjectures as true:

"I do beseech you—

Though I, perchance, am vicious in my guess,
As, I confess, it is my nature's plague
To spy into abuses: and oft my jealousy
Shapes faults that are not—I entreat you then,
From one that so imperfectly conjects,
You'd take no notice; nor build yourself a trouble
Out of his scattering and unsure observance."

In the face of this entreaty and advice, which, coming from the very quarter whence the suspicion has originated, throws, and is intended—for it was not Iago's design to stir the Moor into any quick and extreme jealousy, on conjectures and about trifles which would easily be dissipated to the disgrace of the schemer—to throw a restraining doubt upon the probability of the tale, Othello persists in pressing an explanation, in demanding knowledge of the meaning, the thought of his ancient, who now, in a direct, personal speech, which shows how well he knew that jealousy had already planted itself in his heart, warns him against the passion. Othello's brief reply, those two anguished words, "O MISERY!" prove at once the truth of Iago's suspicion and the correctness of his picture. True, he presently denies it, but how faintly! while his very denial shadows forth the final fatal measures which he may pursue should it not prove false:

"Why? why is this?

Think'st thou, I'd *make a life of jealousy*
To follow still the changes of the moon
With fresh suspicions? No, to be once in doubt
Is—once to be resolv'd—

—No, Iago;

I'll see, before I doubt: when I doubt, prove;
And, on the proof, there is no more but this,
Away at once with love or *jealousy*."

Up to this period of the play Iago had hinted no suspicion of Desdemona's loyalty, had made no question of *her* love; all that has gone before is, except to the suspicious nature of Othello, directed solely against Cassio. Yet how evident the predisposition to jealousy has for some time been in the

eagerness to suspect, and the ease with which evil surmises and dark suggestions are insinuated! It has, indeed, spread so far that, to direct the storm he has so easily raised, Iago's care, during the rest of the scene, is rather to diminish than to aggravate his suspicions:

"I am to pray you not to strain my speech
To grosser issues, nor to longer reach
Than to suspicion. Should you do so, my lord,
My speech should fall into such vile success
As my thoughts aim not at."
"My lord, I would, I might entreat your honour,
To scan this thing no further: leave it to time.
—————In the meanwhile
Let me be thought too busy in my fears
(As worthy cause I have to fear I am),
And hold her free, I do beseech your honour."

How does Othello receive this parting counsel? Listen to him even while Iago is yet present:

"This honest creature, doubtless
Sees and knows *more, much more*, than he unfolds."

And soon as he is alone what says he? Try him out of his own mouth. He has *not* seen before doubting: when he doubts he does *not* wait for proof, but, running rapidly to the worst conclusion, fulfils part at least of his previous promise that he would at once away with love:

"*She's gone: I am abused*: and my relief
Must be to loathe her."

Desdemona enters: the first effect of her appearance was such as to force from Othello the words,

"If she be false,
O! then heaven mocks itself! I'll not believe it;"

but, though they retire together, and in the interval nothing more transpires to confirm the suspicion of Othello, yet when he next appears how is it? Full of that horrible conceit, tossed by that jealous frenzy, doubting his wife's falsehood, yet scarce believing her truth, miserable that he knows so much and that he knows nothing more—his heart already changed by the poison—his mind thrown from its balance—his occupation gone—doting, despairing, melancholy, mad—

dened—how little, in that agitated state, needs there to complete Iago's conquest. And what is that little? A fabricated dream, a purloined handkerchief. Yet enough, quite enough—

“Trifles, light as air,
Are to the jealous confirmations strong
As proofs of holy writ.”

These do the work: and now his rage boils over, his fond love is turned to tyrannous hate, blown to the winds; black vengeance tears his heart. His breast heaves, his eyes roll, his tongue half groans, half screams

“Blood, Iago, blood!
O that the slave had forty thousand lives:
One is too poor, too weak for my revenge!
I would have him nine years a killing.”

Heaven is invoked, and Hell. The villain and his victim unite. The parts are allotted. Cassio is sentenced! Swift means of death are sought out for the fair devil! Iago is Lieutenant!

What is Desdemona's opinion, and what Emilia's, as to Othello's temper? The loving wife, even while she denies that he is jealous, doubts whether he is not so:

“And but my noble Moor
Is true of mind, and made of no such baseness
As jealous creatures are, it were enough
To put him to ill thinking.
Emilia. *Is he not jealous?*”

In the very gift, Othello's first gift to Desdemona, of the fatal handkerchief, and in the motives wherewith it was given to her, there is quite as much jealousy as superstition, and thus the feeling was entertained even *before* their marriage. It was in this spirit that

“He so conjur'd her she would ever keep it,”

telling her its history, as told to his mother by the Egyptian,

“Who was a charmer, and could almost read
The thoughts of people: she told her while she kept it
‘Twould make her amiable, and subdue my father
Entirely to her love: but, if she lost it
Or made a gift of it, my father's eye
Should hold her loathly, and his spirits should hunt
After new fancies. She, dying, gave it me:

And bid me when my fate would have me wive
 To give it her. I did so: and take heed of it,
 Make it a darling, like your precious eye,
 To lose or give 't away were such perdition,
 As nothing else could match."

Othello, in making such a gift, with such motives, doubted the sex, not his wife alone. He feared she might not always be true. This was a jealous fear, making him beforehand provide the means of discovery.

Again asks

"Emilia. Is not this man jealous?"

Desd. I ne'er saw this before.

Sure, there's some wonder in this handkerchief."

Then as to its cause:

*"Emil. Pray heav'n it be state matter,
 And no conception, nor no jealous toy
 Concerning you.*

Desd. Alas the day! I never gave him cause.

*Emil. But jealous souls will not be answer'd so,
 They are not ever jealous for the cause,
 But jealous for they are jealous: 'tis a monster
 Begot upon itself, born on itself.*

Desd. Heav'n keep that monster from Othello's mind.

Emil. Lady, amen!"

But we arrive at a new Act, the fourth, and here again we have the old game played with the same success. Iago by turns aggravating and assuaging the torture he inflicts, deepening the wound while he seems to draw forth his weapon, till the very loathsomeness of his own thoughts, the stupefaction of his inward pain, throws Othello into a moody, metaphysical trance, and he then finds in the existence of his jealousy adequate excuse for its entertainment. "Nature would not invest herself in such shadowing passion without some instruction." Iago has but to let his medicine work on, for he well knows

*"Thus credulous fools are caught;
 And many worthy and chaste dames, ev'n thus,
 All guiltless meet approach."*

Out of this trance, this fit, and lethargy, Othello wakes not, or, if he wakes, it is as one from excess of opium, and but to wander again. He is stunned, helpless, and unmanned; it may be that he is but mocked, to think he has been so dealt with:

and yet, to feel himself, as he feels, "a horned monster, a beast," this certain and conscious effect must have had its true commensurate cause. His injury is rendered more probable, as, Iago assures him, it is an almost universal one, a lot that

"Every bearded fellow, that's but yok'd,
May draw with him."

Such consolation under his misfortune, that he bears it but in common with the mass, proves to Othello the wisdom of his ancient, the certainty of his own wrong. The further offer of ocular proof confirms him. It is blindly accepted, even while he is warned to "stand *apart*," to keep "*encaved*" so that he may hear nothing—that is, nothing justly, nothing but what shall establish his suspicions—while all he sees, working the same way, is to be treasured up as beyond all question:

"But mark the fleers, the gibes and notable scorns
That dwell in every region of his face,
I say, but mark his gesture,"

and in so marking these, he is to "confine himself in a patient list," practise "patience," not to rush forward, to break out, but to remain *perdu*. To all which he promises that

"He will be found most cunning in his patience,
But (dost thou hear) most bloody."

That is, he binds himself to the extreme of vengeance *before* he has obtained the desired proof. This is jealousy, convincing itself, condemning its victim, seeking its own justification, lantern in hand at noon-day, rushing to the end even while it waits for the evidence.

Cassio returns, and Iago proceeds to question him about his fortunes with the fair and free Bianca, sure that

"He when he hears of her cannot refrain
From the excess of laughter"

likely most to exceed, when once excited from the previous depression of spirits into which his professional disgrace had thrown him:

"As he shall smile Othello shall go mad;
And his unbookish jealousy must construe
Poor Cassio's smiles, gestures, and light behaviour
Quite in the wrong."

As was foreseen by Iago, Cassio's behaviour is of this colour, and all passes within Othello's own observation. In such situations the senses are quick, catching, and closely sympathetic. What the mind has reasoned itself into as probable, the outer senses receive as almost palpable. The ear thinks it hears what the eye knows it sees, as, at times, this taste recalls that scent, the colour of a flower, the flavour of a fruit. This may be the explanation of the first part of the scene, for, in all that Othello here *says*, it can only be distantly perceived that he may also hear. But even this further kind of proof Iago is not unwilling to give him, in the degree. Therefore he beckons Othello to come nearer, and makes Cassio begin the story of his sayings and doings with his light-o'-love. He describes Bianca as having been with him "here even now"—*so* had Desdemona—as haunting him in every place: that when but the other day he was, with certain friends, on the public place, by the open strand, and under the broad day, there also came this bauble, falling about his neck, hanging there and lolling, weeping upon him, hauling and pulling him home with her. Othello takes it all as of his wife. And who is that wife? One who but a few weeks past was known in Venice

"——a maiden tender, fair, and happy,
And opposite to marriage: never bold,
Of spirit so still and quiet, that her motion
Blush'd at herself."

This is she, Brabantio's chaste and noble daughter, of whom Othello now believes such a tale as the above, publicly avowing her shame, parading her wantonness before her very countrymen, lavishing, forcing her love upon her unwilling follower. His own words presently paint her as a public commoner, an impudent strumpet, a whore, a double-cunning whore. Wilful self-blinded jealousy alone could credit it. And such most surely was that of the Moor.

But a short while intervenes, and Othello, parleying with Emilia, seeks to gain from her a confirmation of his belief. All that she says has the contrary tendency. She had seen nothing, heard everything that passed between the suspected

pair, but she saw not, nor ever suspected any harm. How full and frank is her defence of her mistress:

"I durst my lord, in wager she is honest
Lay down my soul at stake: if you think other,
Remove your thought: it doth abuse your bosom,
For if she be not honest, chaste, and true,
There's no man happy: the purest of their wives
Is foul as slander."

But it has no exculpatory effect, leaves no impression in her favour. Why? Because Othello is not only now a man made jealous, but a jealous man. He has blackened the thing he loved, and then seeks to harden himself into hating it, because he had blackened it. His passion has in it the chief elements of jealousy: its lingering love for the thing so soon to be crushed out: its fond recollections of her many amiable qualities and gentle conditions, making her crime all the worse; its determination to do, and yet its pity of the deed: its defeated vanity and selfish disappointment:

"Cuckold me! With mine officer."
"———alas! to make me
A fixed figure for the time of scorn
To point his slow unmoving finger at;"

it has its bloody thirst, its savage cruelty, its instant and exterminating hate. "Let her rot, and perish and be damned to-night; for she shall not live. I will chop her into messes. Get me some poison, Iago: this night, this night, Iago: or strangle her in her bed? Good, good, very good, excellent good." All of these are visible in him, and the result is sure, and close at hand. Alas for the poor lady! Alas for Desdemona!

Look at her, listen to her, when thus left alone. Pure, gentle, faithful, suffering, she breathes no word of complaint. The blow has stunned her; she is as one half asleep, to whom tears are forbidden and language lost:

"I have no lord: talk not to me, Emilia;
I cannot weep; nor answer I have none,
But what should go by water. Prythee, to-night
Lay on my bed my wedding sheets—remember."

How the recollections of virgin pride, the consciousness of the

wife's purity, the hope of yet and at once reclaiming a husband's love, live in the simple words. Then her patience and her humility:

" 'Tis meet I should be us'd so, very meet."

Her ignorance of the very thought, the mere name of the crime, which, new to her heart, her lips cannot syllable:

"Am I *that word*, Iago?

Such as, she says, my lord did say I was."

The blame is not Othello's; "it is her wretched fortune."

"How the trick came upon him, Heav'n doth know,"

not she; it is hers to suffer for it, and forgive while she suffers, to pray for those who have wronged her with Othello, doubting also that any could have done so:

"If any such there be, heaven pardon him."

And then her enduring love for the Moor, her blessed longing for his, her utter forgetfulness of self, her intense devotedness, how these stand out, shine forth as thus she kneels:

"O good Iago,

What shall I do to win my lord again?
Good friend, go to him: for, by this light of heaven,
I know not how I lost him. Here I kneel:—
If e'er my will did trespass 'gainst his love,
Either in discourse of thought, or actual deed;
Or that mine eyes, mine ears, or any sense,
Delighted them in any other form:
Or that I do not yet, and ever did,
And ever will—though he do shake me off
To beggarly divorcement—love him dearly,
Comfort forswear me! Unkindness may do much:
And his unkindness may defeat my life,
But never taint my love."

Bending before Heaven, kneeling to her murderer—as the lambkin to its butcher "kissing the hand just rais'd to shed its blood"—how pure, and calm, and beautiful, is Desdemona here. And such is woman everywhere, if rightly known, if fairly dealt with, their faults as dust in the balance when compared with those of men—often too of our making—and their virtues, all their own, far, far above ours.

And now it is night, the banquet is over, the guests are departed, and with them for awhile is gone the Moor. Emilia

and her mistress are together. No man is a hero to his valet. No woman is anything more than such to her maid. With the most careful and considerate, there is often, begotten of that mere personal attendance, particularly if it dates from an early period, a confidence and communicativeness between maid and mistress, to which the purity and dignity of the latter are almost the only sure limits. Desdemona has preserved both, and, even in this hour of extreme and undeserved suffering, nothing falls from her which the loving virgin might blush at. All is forgiven, all is sought to be—not that it is, or yet can be—forgotten. To her Othello's coldness still is kind—

“ her love doth so approve him
That e'en his stubbornness, his checks and frowns
Have grace and favour in them.”

And yet is her mind, against herself, oppressed and overcome with its sudden and so late affliction, overshadowed too with her coming fate, which yet she dreamt not of: patient is she and nerved up, but it is against a life of suffering, not a death of cruelty. The foreground still lowers for her: the dark future reveals itself in terrible glimpses which she cannot all shut out. Emilia has “laid those sheets she bade her on the bed.” But they awake not now recollections, or expectations that shall be again enjoyed. A sad doubt, we might say, a conscious prophecy is forced upon her by the events which surround her:

“ If I do die before thee, prythee, shroud me
In one of those same sheets.”

Her thoughts are already of the grave, her words as the music of the dying swan:

“ My mother had a maid call'd—Barbara:
She was in love; and he, she lov'd, prov'd mad,
And did forsake her; she had a song of—*willow*;
An old thing 'twas, but it expressed her fortune,
And she did singing it: that song, to-night,
Will not go from my mind.”

It expressed 'thy fortune too, sweet Desdemona, and, like the deserted girl of the song, thine also it was to die singing, love and music in thy latest sighs.

It is natural that their conversation should fall upon her quarrel with Othello and its cause. Her suspected crime, the mere idea of the possibility of which is one that her pure mind cannot embrace, and her true heart rebels against:

"Dost thou in conscience think—tell me, Emilia—
That there be women do abuse their husbands?"

And then the twice repeated question—

"Wouldst thou do such a deed for all the world?"

self-answered indignantly, instantly,

"No, by this heavenly light!
I would not do such wrong for the whole world"—

a defence which extends to her whole sex, for of any and all she feels and thinks the same:

"I do not think there is any such woman."

Emilia's is far from an unexceptionable character. She is of a worldly loose morality; yet her feelings are warm and quick and generous. Her sympathy with Desdemona, her resistance against Othello's suborning attempts, her rage at the lurking slanderers, her defiance of the Moor, her imprecations on Iago, when the deed is done: there is much in all this that greatly redeems an else erring character. But we pause upon it here for a different purpose, merely to remark upon the practical wisdom, the useful truth which there is in her language:

"Yes, but I think it is their husbands' faults,
If wives do fall."

"Let husbands know
Their wives have sense like them: they see, and smell,
And have their palates both for sweet and sour,
As husbands have. What is it that they do,
When they change us for others? Is it sport?
Is it affection breeds, or frailty errs?
And have not we affections?
Desires for sport? and frailty, as men have?
Then, let them use us well, else, let them know,
The ills we do, their ills instruct us to."

This is a text which men would do well to get by heart and keep there.

We approach the final fatal scene. Desdemona sleeps, that

sleep which has but once to wake, and then never more to end. A single light illumines the antique chamber. Her dark hair escapes from her kerchief and floats adown the pillow, cushioning a cheek as soft and white as itself. Her loosen'd robe—for we are in Cyprus, and it is summer—but half conceals that sweet neck and the billowy whiteness of her delicate breast: one fair and finely rounded arm droops by her side. Traces of sorrow and suffering may be imagined upon her brow and cheek, for ever and anon,—light and passing clouds upon an else bright lake—they fade and quiver as with some inward emotion. At times her lips move, and, though the ear takes in no sound, the heart hears her prayers to Heaven, her blessings on her cruel lord. She recalls another sweet picture of another lovely but more fortunate wife, sleeping like Desdemona her last sleep. Petrarch has painted for us the dying Laura, and the likenesses are easily convertible:

*" Pallida no, ma pin che neve bianca
Che senza vento in un bel colle flocchi
Parea posar come persona stanca."*

Othello enters. He has bound himself up in one miserable and murderous thought. He has screwed up his courage to the sticking place. Nothing must enter his mind that may disturb its fatal determination. His soul is nerved for the coming crime by the nameless and inevitable cause. He sees and feels nothing else, or more:

*" It is the cause, it is the cause my soul—
It is the cause."*

That cause makes the murder which he intends seem but as a sacrifice, necessary, holy. He has dwelt upon it till it has become his all in all, still marshalling him the way that he must go.

He turns and moves toward her, looking on, bending over her as she sleeps. He would not kill her in her slumber, yet he will not wake her to her death. If she awake she will beseech, and may move and melt him from his purpose. When therefore she wakes he will not expostulate with her, lest her body and her beauty unprovide his mind again. Such

was his resolve: but her loveliness is not to be resisted. In sleep at least she may be innocent. Fate demands her victim, but love stays his hand. The light must be quenched, the rose must be plucked, but, ere they are extinguished and withered, how his better nature almost relents above their brightness and their fragrance. The agony of his spirit, oscillating between the depth of his disgrace and the pity of his revenge, dazzled by her extreme beauty, desperate with her utter falsehood, is dreadful and sublime. He stoops to smell the rose upon the tree, to kiss her ere he kills.

Byron in his best poem—we mean his poem of the greatest and most frequent beauties—has several beautiful stanzas, descriptive of their genuine and unequalled joy “who watch o’er what they *love* while sleeping.” What then must be his feeling who bends over the sleeping object of his *hate*; and what his who scarce knows whether he loves or hates, whether he should crush or cherish the form which lies before him? We have but to alter a word or two, and it applies well to Othello:

“For there it lies so tranquil, *once* beloved,
 All that it hath of life with him is living;
 So gentle, stirless, helpless and unmov’d.
 And all unconscious of the pain ‘tis giving,
 All it hath felt, inflicted, pass’d and prov’d,
 Hush’d into depths beyond the watcher’s diving,
 There lies the thing he loved with all her errors
 And all her charms, like death without his terrors.”

Not long to remain so, for the grisly tyrant already poises and points his dart. She wakes.

There is not in what follows much that suits us to remark upon. He is stern, sullen, sarcastic, she all sweetness, resignation, and to the last loving. He would not kill her soul, her unprepared spirit. She cannot believe that he will kill her body. She fears, yet knows not why, for she feels her innocence, and that even her sins are but the loves she bears to him. Yet with his eyes rolling so, that nether lip thus gnawed, his very frame so shaken, Othello, she fears, may be in fatal earnest. She is allowed but short shrift. Silence is commanded,

for her eloquence might be troublesome. He accuses her as to the handkerchief, that she gave it to Cassio; he will take no denial, hear no defence. In vain she assures him, by her life and soul, that it is not so:

"I never did
Offend you in my life: never lov'd Cassio
But with such general warranty of heav'n
As I might love: I never gave him token:
Send for the man and ask him."

No! that he had seen that handkerchief in Cassio's hand is to Othello answer sufficient, and proof satisfactory of all the rest. The near and natural excuse that Cassio might have found it is inadmissible, beyond credence, not worth a thought, a subterfuge! But the dialogue must here speak for itself:

<p>Des. Oth. Des. Oth. Des. Oth. Des. Oth. Des. Oth. Des. Oth. Des. Oth. Des. Oth. Des. Oth. Des. Oth. Des. Oth. Des. Oth.</p>	<p>Send for him hither, And let him confess a truth. He hath confess'd. What, my lord? That he hath—us'd thee. How? unlawfully? Ay! He'll not say so. No, his mouth is stopp'd; Honest Iago hath ta'en order for it. My fear interprets then,—What, is he dead? Had all his hairs been lives, my great revenge Had stomach for them all. Alas! he is betray'd, and I undone. Out, strumpet! Weep'st thou for him to my face? O, banish me, my lord, but kill me not. Down, strumpet! Kill me to-morrow, let me live to-night. Nay, if you strive— But half an hour. Being done There is no pause. But while I say one prayer. It is too late. (He smother's her.)"</p>
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We will now confine ourselves to any remaining proofs that the subsequent play affords of the jealous nature, and that alone, of Othello. He is jealous *after* his revenge, that is, he confirms and maintains it in the very face of that which should

most disprove. Poor Desdemona yet breathes, speaking a few broken words, to be ever after silent.

Des. O, falsely, falsely murder'd!
A guiltless death I die.

Emil. O who hath done
This deed!

Des. Nobody—I myself: farewell:
Commend me to my kind lord: O farewell! (*Dies.*)"

The dying wife acquits her murderer: attributes her death to herself, to no one else, and with her last breath begs to be remembered to her *kind* lord. In short, she dies blessing him and forgiving. If Othello had been merely surprised into jealousy, if he had not been of a jealous nature, he would have been undeceived, we think, at once, as to his previous suspicions. But he retains them wilfully to the last, and it is only perforce, step by step, that he is enlightened as to his wife's innocence and his own rash and fatal cruelty. Emilia's reiterated asseverations that he belied his wife, that she was heavenly true, should have shaken him; but no! they are all given in vain. Triumphant in that he had himself killed her, that she had gone to burning hell with a lie on her lips, a new sin added to the old list, he insists that she had turned to folly, was a whore, as false as water. This desperate incredulity, and wilful persistence in a now palpable error, is continued even after the entry of Montano, Gratiano, and Iago. It is to them he addresses his defence; the assurance he still held of Desdemona's guilt he seeks to impress upon them:

" 'Tis pitiful: but yet Iago knows
That she with Cassio hath the act of shame
A thousand times committed; Cassio confess'd it;
And she did gratify his amorous works
With that recognisance and pledge of love
Which I first gave her; I saw it in his hand;
It was a handkerchief, an antique token
My father gave my mother."

Nor is it, until Emilia's statement,

" That handkerchief thou speak'st of
I found by fortune, and did give my husband;
For often, with a solemn earnestness,
(More than, indeed, belong'd to such a trifle)
He begg'd of me to steal it,"

is confirmed by the fact of Iago stabbing his wife to silence her, that his eyes are opened, and he can at last see what a gull, a dolt, a fool he has been, and what the blackness of his crime in having violently hurried her from life:

"Now, how dost thou look now? O ill-starr'd wench,
Pale as thy smock! when we shall meet at compt,
This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven
And fiends will snatch at it: cold, cold my girl
Even like thy chastity."

We have thus shown, we think pretty clearly, that Coleridge, if in earnest, was in error in the opinion expressed, and that the old and common notion of the character of Othello being intended to illustrate the passion of jealousy is the true one. Genius is not always able to resist the temptation of standing in opposition to the great mass of mankind. It adds an appearance of originality, and almost excuses a claim to the reputation of superior sagacity and refinement. As a mere practice with the foils of criticism, a kind of sham fight of the intellect, or as a playful display of controversial subtlety and acuteness, an occasional paradox, like this of Coleridge's, might, from such as him, be allowed to pass, in private society, without any severity of inquiry, or it may even afford a harmless and indeed not un-instructive amusement. But it is time to rescue criticism from the contempt of sober people, when we find such freaks of fancy, publicly and repeatedly, supported with gravity and earnestness by those who profess to guide and correct the public taste. We cannot conceive a less acceptable compliment to the genius of Shakspeare than that which, if serious, Coleridge pays him in such an opinion as the above. If our great poet, and not ours alone—but the great poet of all time and space—meant to convey an impression that Othello was not a jealous man, never was there a more complete and miserable failure, a failure the greatest that can possibly be conceived in any author, more particularly perhaps in a dramatist, because it arises from proved inability to work out what he himself means. Until Coleridge uttered this startling criticism, all the world was well agreed as to the intent and purpose of the character of Othello.

And even now the great mass of the people continue as blind as ever to any contrary design of the poet than this, in that character, to personify and portray the feeling of jealousy. Who ever sees the acted play, who in his closet ever reads the written play, and troubles his head with the new opinion which we here combat? Is then Shakspeare himself at fault, or is it not merely that his critic is more adventurous than successful? Yes! his countless admirers have not for 250 years cherished an egregious error and cannot now part with their old faith.

We would wish to make a concluding remark. It may well have been made before, although unknown to us. It is the great and true compliment—all compliments to be great should be true, else they degenerate into mere flattery, and the hearts and minds of both giver and taker are deteriorated by the attempt to pass, the willingness to receive the counterfeit coin—which Shakspeare has so justly paid to the fair sex, not in the character of Desdemona, but in that of Othello. We repeat it, in his character not in hers. Desdemona is all that is perfect and pure and beautiful. In person, the cunningest pattern of excelling nature, in mind and soul she has as much of the angel about her as Heaven ever vouchsafed to show upon earth. But this is not what we mean; *our* compliment is that, caring not for station, age, creed, colour, country, credit, anything, she weds the heart and mind of Othello, the noble soldier, the high-spirited and conquering Moor. She looked deeper than the skin; the shadowed livery of the burnished sun misliked not her—she saw beneath, within, to prove whose blood was reddest, his or hers. She cared not that he was rude in speech, and little blest with the set phrase of peace, wanting mayhap in those soft parts of conversation which chamberers have: she saw not that he was black, declined into the vale of years: she asked not to whom related or by whom begot—though here, too, was she rewarded, for Othello

“ fetch'd his life and being
From men of royal selge; and his demerits
Might speak, unbonneted, to as proud a fortune
As this that he has reach'd”—

she loved his great heart, his noble deeds, his taintless honour, his well-won fame; she loved the hero, the chief, judging not from complement extern, but from what he had done and might do. Others attributed her love to drugs and charms, to conjurations and to mighty magic, wondering

“that she who shunn’d
The wealthy curled darlings of her nation,
Would ever have, to incur a general mock,
Run from her father to the sooty bosom
Of such a thing as this, to fear not to delight.”

But this appalled not her; the first strangeness overcome, it rather attracted her to hear

“The battles, sieges, fortunes I had pass’d,
Which I observing,
Took once a pliant hour and found good means
To draw from her a pray’r of earnest heart,
That I would all my pilgrimage dilate
Whereof by parcels she had something heard,
But not intently: I did consent,
And often did beguile her of her tears
When I did speak of some distressful stroke
That my youth suffer’d. My story being done,
She gave me for my pains a world of sighs:
She swore—In faith, ’twas strange, ’twas passing strange;
’Twas pitiful, ’twas wondrous pitiful;
She wish’d she had not heard it: yet she wish’d
That heav’n had made her such a man: she thank’d me
And bade me, if I had a friend that lov’d her,
I should but teach him how to tell my story,
And that would woo her.

Upon this hint I spake,
She lov’d me for the dangers I had pass’d;
And I lov’d her that she did pity them.”

This was Othello’s sole witchcraft, this the triumphant spell which overmastered all obstacles between them, the *open sesame* of hearts worthy to be loved and capable only of loving what was worthy. Shakspeare intended this compliment to the fair sex, who well deserve it. From Desdemona’s own lips, in the high council of the Doge, and before the most potent, grave, and reverend signiors of the state, she avows it, with a virtuous pride:

"That I did love the Moor to live with him,
 My downright violence and storm of fortunes
 May trumpet to the world: *my heart's subdued*
Even to the very quality of my lord:
I saw Othello's visage in his mind:
And to his honours and his valiant parts,
Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate ;
 So that, dear lords, if I be left behind,
 A moth of peace, and he go to the war,
 The rights for which I love him are bereft me,
 And I a heavy interim shall support
 By his dear absence: let me go with him."

This, then, is *the* higher, greater compliment to which we wished to draw notice. We are within the judgment of the sex—to *selfish, contaminating man we appeal not*—if it is not also a truth, of which most of them are capable, and many have practised.

AGAMEMNON,

A Tragedy ;

ALTERED FROM ALFIERI.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

AGAMEMNON.

CEGYSTHUS.

PEOPLE, SOLDIERS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

ELECTRA.

SCENE.—The royal palace at Argos.

AGAMEMNON.

CEGYSTHUS.

IT will not be—vainly at holy shrines
I bend my knee praying for better thoughts;
It may not be—the Fates will have their due;
The stern undying spirit of revenge
Will not be cheated thus: my father's shade
Pursues me, bloody and indignant still;
I have no strength longer to combat it:
What must be must, I yield me to its voice.
Now am I thine, Thyestes, wholly thine!
Here do I cast aside all milder thoughts,
All common sympathies and humbler aims,
And consecrate my being to revenge,
To pitiless hate, and blackest thoughts of blood.
Even as I speak, audibly in my breast
The list'ning furies laud the terrible vow,
And where their fiercest stings late vainly prick'd
Its indecision, promise triumph now;
While, boiling thro' my veins, my parents' blood
Demands their death who wrought our race such wrongs.
Nor shall they vainly ask it—'tis resolved.
E'en now my foe, Troy's victor, great Atrides
With glory crown'd to Argos back returns:
I wait him here, here in his palace hall.
Would he were come! short shall his triumph be!
The time is near, Thyestes, thine shall be
No single victim, the universal blood
Of Atreus shall avenge thee.

—But, no rashness!

Let me use art, ere I unsheathe the sword;
Unarm'd, alone, I brave a powerful king,
O'er whom nor victory, vengeance shall be mine
If my full heart control not its long hate.

ÆGYSTHUS. CLYTEMNESTRA.

Clytem. Ægysthus, ever must I find you thus,
Lonely and sad, to gloomy thoughts a prey?
Hide you from me your sorrows? must I still
See you shun her who lives alone in you?

Ægys. I am too much a stranger in these halls;
'Tis true your kindness props me; but for that,
And that you here are Queen, my foot had never
The threshold crossed; for you alone I came,
For you I here remain. But ah! the day,
The mournful day already is at hand
When e'en your voice shall bid me hence depart.

Clytem. My voice? Oh think not so; that ne'er can be:
Oaths profit little, nought; yourself be judge,
If in this loving heart a single thought
I cherish save of you.

Ægys. And were I such
As you would have me think, your breast's sole thought,
If me your honour aught concern, great Queen,
Methinks I rather ought to seek my death—
And would so—sooner than disturb your peace,
Obscure your fame, or take from you one jot
Of Agamemnon's love. It is my fate,
For that I am Thyestes' wretched child,
Wand'ring, revil'd, obscure, and poor to live;
Son of an infamous father, I am deemed
More infamous still, though innocent; I want
Riches, and friends and power, and arrogant modes
To cancel in me the defect and shame
Of birth, the stain of my paternal name.

It is not with Atrides thus! in him
 Troy weeps her glorious conqueror; will he ever
 Endure in Argos the detested son
 Of his implacable and deadliest foe?

Clytem. And, if he does return, that ancient feud
 In his new glories will be all forgotten;
 A conquering king knows not to treasure hate
 For foe he fears not.

Ægys. True, I am so weak
 No one need fear; exil'd, unarm'd, alone,
 Great Agamemnon will not deign to hate:
 But he may scorn me: would you have me stay
 And brook such outrage? Is it thus your love
 Counsels me to embrace my own dishonour?

Clytem. And yours? Is this its proof, calmly to think
 Of leaving me?

Ægys. 'Tis idle to deceive
 In such an hour. Necessity suggests
 The fatal thought; for, hope you, if your lord
 Were even willing to forget the wrongs
 My sire had done him, he would stoop to feign,
 Or long be ignorant of the foul shame
 His love here suffers? If I stay, I must
 Flee your dear presence; flee and lead a life
 Far worse than death; for, ever in your sight
 If I should come, a single careless look,
 Or sigh unconscious might our love betray:
 And then what were our fate? Alas! the least
 Suspicion in the king would deem us guilty
 Of the worst crime. Not of myself I think,
 Nor fear I aught, for I am arm'd to give
 That terrible proof of truest love, to die,
 And save at once your honour and your life.

Clytem. But who, who knows he will return? So
 distant
 The danger is, I dream not of the chance.
 Many long moons are past since Troy's proud walls

Lay in the dust. Atrides still survives
 And still returns not. Fame, we know, reports
 The Grecian vessels far and wide dispers'd
 By boisterous winds. The day perhaps is near
 Which shall, at last, bring my rent heart revenge,
 Perfect though tardy, for my murder'd child.

Ægys. And were it come, would the illustrious widow
 Of the great King of kings e'er deign to turn
 Her glance on me? on me, of unkind fate
 The miserable butt, the obscure scion
 Of a detested race? on me who want
 Glory and gold, arms, subjects, friends—

Clytem. —And crimes;
 Add this unto the rest; your hand nor bears
 Atrides' sceptre in its grasp, nor yet
 His dagger reeking with the innocent blood
 Of my dear child. May Heav'n my witness be!
 My heart none other but Atrides lov'd
 Ere yet he tore my daughter from mine arms,
 And bound her victim to an impious shrine:
 The deadly memory of that fatal day,
 That horrible deed, with anguish and wild rage
 Tortures me ever. Not to the vain dreams
 Of a false augur, but to the more true
 Ambition of a most inhuman sire,
 My blood, my child was sacrificed, by stealth
 Ta'en from my care, under the lying hope
 Of prosperous marriage. From that hour till now
 I feel a cold sick horror at the name
 Of such a sire. I have not seen him since;
 And if, at last, Fortune should now betray him—

Ægys. —She never will do so; she will be true
 Howe'er he wearies her; 'twas she who led him
 Chief of the Grecian hosts to Xanthus' side;
 'Twas Fortune, not his virtue, which subdued
 The inexorable wrath of fierce Achilles,
 And the great Hector's valour; she will bring him

Haughty and full of spoils to Argos home.
 Not long, not long, and Agamemnon shall
 Share your sweet couch; fair pledges yet remain
 Of your old loves, Electra and Orestes,
 Pledges to a new peace; before his flame
 The base love which for me your breast now fosters
 Shall melt away as clouds before the sun.

Clytem. Dear is Electra, needful is Orestes—
 But ever in my heart the plaintive voice
 Of my dear dying Iphigene resounds:
 In sad reproachful tones I hear her cry
 “*Lo’st thou my cruel murd’rer, mother?*” No!
 I love him not. Ah me! a better father
 Hadst thou, *Ægysthus*, to my children been.

Ægys. Grant Heav’n! I may one day possess the name;
 But vain such lofty hope. Nought else for me
 In the dark future rests but shame and grief,
 Misery and ruin. As you so desire
 Here will I meet my fate, whate’er it be;
 I will remain while mine alone the risk,
 If you it threaten, I shall know to die
 Sole victim of a most unhappy love.

Clytem. Ere that shall come to pass myself will make
 Our fortunes indivisible. Thy frank
 And modest speech excites me more; each hour
 I see thee worthy of a better fate.
 And—but Electra comes; leave me with her;
 I love her, and, for you, would gain her favour.

[*Exit Ægysthus.*

ELECTRA. CLYTEMNESTRA.

Elec. Dear mother! can it be that cruel fate
 Condemns us to eternal pain and dread,
 You for your absent lord to sigh in vain,
 Me for my father? Oh what boots it us

To hear the tale of lofty Troy o'erthrown,
 If ev'ry hour new perils rise to bar
 The progress of her glorious conqueror home?

Clytem. What then, the rumour strengthens which so late
 Describ'd the Grecian fleet dispers'd and wreck'd?

Elec. Doubtful and various are the tidings spread;
 Some state our fleet within the Bosphorus
 By storms continuous from the turbulent south
 Driven and detained; others on our own seas
 Swear to have seen their whit'ning sails advance;
 Some too there are who say the royal bark
 Struck on a rock, where, found'ring, all her crew
 Together with the king were in her whelm'd.
 Alas for us! who know not 'mid so many
 Which to believe. Mother, how end this doubt,
 This killing keen suspense?

Clytem. The adverse winds,
 Which so long thwarted his departure hence,
 Till blood was shed, perchance till blood is shed
 Permit not his return. O my dear children,
 Right joyful am I to have kept you here
 In safety by my side. For you at least,
 I have not now, as ten years past, to tremble.

Elec. What do I hear? my mother, why recal
 That sacrifice? 'twas terrible, 'twas fatal,
 But necessary too. If Heav'n to-day
 Ask'd of you yet another daughter's blood,
 Joyful would I to the death-altar run,
 To save, for you your husband, for the Greeks
 Their captain, for my country her great King.

Clytem. I know your sire is dear to you, do you love
 Your mother so?

Elec. I love you both alike,
 But now my sire's in danger, and alas!
 At the sad thought nor pity fills your eye,
 Nor terror pales your cheek. You do not love him,
 Mother, as well as I?

Clytem.

I know him better!

Elec. O Heav'n! what say you? but a few months back
You did not thus speak of him. From the time
Our warriors sailed for Troy, slowly and sad,
Scarce had a lustre past, yet day by day,
I've heard you sigh for his return. To us
Still would you talk of him, in him alone
Seem to exist, from him instructing us;
And in that parley I have mark'd your cheek
Wet with the bitter tears of truest love.
You have not seen him since, he is the same;
'Tis you alone are changed, alas! too much;
Some new and secret cause there is, which shows him
Thus different in your sight from what he was.

Clytem. Some new and secret cause? Go to—my heart
Has been, must ever be, against him clos'd:
Listen, Electra! should I here unlock
My bosom's inmost thoughts—

Elec. —I know them, mother,
Such as they are; would they were different!

Clytem. What mean you? can she guess?

Elec. Heav'n grant that I
Alone have guessed your heart. What! know you not
That ever on the motions of the great,
The ambitious, envious, and malignant watch,
Spies numerous as the heads which bow in homage?
You only do not hear the vulgar rumour,
And so believe what you but ill conceal
Hidden from all. 'Tis Love that blinds you.

Clytem.

Love!

Ah me! who has betray'd me thus?

Elec.

Yourself,

And long ago. Not from your lips should I
Hear such a flame avow'd; to speak of it
Too much would cost you. O beloved mother!
I cannot think that any fiercer flame
Consumes your heart; involuntary love,

Born of compassion which unfortunate youth
 Ever inspires; such is the snare wherein
 Unconscious you are caught. As yet you have had
 No cause to make strict question of yourself:
 Mistrust of its own virtue enters not
 The pure self-conscious bosom; there may be
 No ground for doubt; uninjur'd may remain
 Your honour and your honour's credit still.
 For your late weakness ev'ry action now
 Should make sublime amendment. By the dear
 And sacred manes of your victim child,
 By the love you have borne me, whereof now
 I am not all unworthy, by the life
 Of our Orestes, mother, pause! withdraw
 Your rash foot from the horrid precipice!
 Remove this fatal stranger, this Ægysthus!
 Silence the growing scandal; and with us
 Mourn great Atrides' fate, and Heav'n implore
 With pray'rs and humbleness for his return.

Clytem. Remove Ægysthus! Can you be so harsh?
 Methinks I have liv'd too long since mine own child
 Wishes me dead.

Elec. True—I would rather see you
 Dead to my love than lost to your own fame;
 Mother! forego this madness; ah! reflect,
 Return, ere worse shall come of it: your lord,
 My father merits not, nor will endure
 Such treason.

Clytem. But, perchance, he may not live
 To know it.

Elec. Horrible thought! are such the words
 Which, from your lips, should reach a daughter's ear?
 You make me shudder.

Clytem. My kind good Electra!
 I am much tried and know not where to turn:
 Shrink not you from me in my misery: rather
 Pity the weakness of your erring mother!

Pity her that 'tis perfect! The long absence
Of a harsh lord, my fatal destiny,
The merits of Ægysthus—

Elec.

—O just Heav'n!

The merits of Ægysthus! you know little
His heart you praise; he springs from such a race
That no true virtue can exist in him:
The child of horrid incest, banish'd, base,
Can you to the great King of men design
Such a successor?

Clytem.

And, and what am I?

Am I not Leda's daughter, Helen's sister?
Runs not one blood in both our veins? Like her
Some unknown pow'r, the will of angry Gods,
In mine own spite impels me.

Elec.

Do you still

Call Helen sister? if you will, then go,
Resemble Helen; but, at least, make not
Yourself more guilty: she betray'd her lord,
But had no child: she fled, but took no throne
From her own blood; more credulous, you would give
Not yourself only, but the crown, your children,
To an Ægysthus.

Clytem.

Even should the Fates

Remove Atrides, think not that I ever
Would seek to rob Orestes of the throne,
His rightful seat. Ægysthus, tho' my spouse,
Will not be therefore King; but he would be
My boy's defender, father—

Elec.

—He would be

A wicked tyrant, the oppressor, foe
Of my poor brother; and perchance, dread thought!
His cruel murd'rer. Mother, would you leave
Your child to him who may usurp his throne?
Or will you to Thyestes' hated son
Trust Atreus' grandchild? But in vain with you
I stretch the bounds of filial duty. Rather

Pray we and hope that still Atrides lives:
 My heart assures me so: each meaner flame
 Shall be extinguish'd in you at his sight;
 And I, as pious daughter ought, will hide
 This weighty secret in my breast for ever. [*Exit Electra.*]

Clytem. Woe! woe is me! truth shines in her advice,
 And love suggests it; but so brief a ray
 Of reason lights me that I fear to follow.

ACT II.

CLYTEMNESTRA. ÆGYSTHUS.

Ægys. I told you so before, the hour of hope
 Is past for aye; 'tis now the time to tremble.
 Fortune, the Gods and favourable winds
 Guide with full sails Atrides back to port.
 I, who, but late, from Argos might have gone
 Without your slightest risk, without your fame
 Suff'ring one stain, must, from his presence, now
 Flee like a felon, and leave you a prey
 To his right royal and despotic pow'r,
 Must go, I know not where, far, far from you
 To die of my heart's grief. To what keen misery
 Vain hopes and yeldance weak have sunk me down!

Clytem. Who talks of flight? why fear? what is your
 crime?

'Tis I am guilty; but am guilty only
 To my own heart. How shall Atrides know
 Its thoughts?

Ægys. How can true love be hidden? Ours
 Alas! is too well known. Can you still hope
 The King will not discover it?

Clytem. What's he
 Shall dare to tell it him until he know
 If the infamous tale will bring him pain or profit?

You little know the use and way of courts:
 Suspicion of false crimes is still on foot,
 But the true do not always reach the throne,
 Or else at times high pride might get a rub.
 I am not free from fear, but from my heart
 I have not therefore banished all old hope.
 One thing—'tis all I ask of you, *Ægysthus*—
 Deny it to me not—one short day's time,
 A single day. As yet I deem'd the peril
 Remote and doubtful: hence I something fail
 To find at once its needful remedy:
 Let me take fitting counsel from the event:
 The looks and motions of the King I'll watch:
 Yet may you stay, unknown—

Ægys.

—In Argos, I,

Thyestes' son, unknown?

Clytem.

One day at least,

Fain would I hope it; one day will suffice
 To teach me how to act. Meanwhile believe
 My faith entirely yours; and know, that ere
 I would abandon you, I am resolved
 To tread the path of Helen—

Ægys.

—Know that I

A thousand times would perish, ere your name
 Should be contaminate: of mine own I speak not
 Which unjust fate damns to eternal shame.

—Yet, would I that I knew my life were all
 Which I should lose if I in Argos stayed.

No! in Atrides' court, my father's son

Must scorn and shame endure: and, after all,

What if he should discover that we love?

The death I have so long'd for I should meet,

But infamous as power could make it. And you

Would be compell'd to gaze upon my writhings,

And, when on my poor frame hate could no more,

To have your ear stung with the bitterness

Of his insulting pride, if, haply, words

May sate his choking rage. My love alone
 Teaches me fear, for you. O while you may
 Forget me, flee me: I was born obscure,
 Leave me to die so: to my fate, whate'er
 It be, abandon me: henceforth from you
 Proscribe I to myself eternal exile.
 Forbid nor stay me not: your old affection
 Give to your lord, worthier of you, for so
 The Gods and Fortune will it, if not Love.

Clytem. Fortune, the Gods, and reason, all in vain
 Oppose my love. O! to mine earnest pray'rs
 Grant this one day; or else I will delude,
 Defeat, with my wild words, your loving care,
 Headlong to infamy, headlong to death
 I'll rush in my despair, rush and betray
 Even to yon proud king this impure flame,
 And perish with you. Vainly your fond hope
 Would seek my fate to sever from your own;
 Whither you go, go I, where you die, there
 I too.

Ægys. Me miserable!

Clytem.

Nay, nay, speak!

Can you to my great love deny one day?

Ægys. Ah why thus urge me to our mutual ill?
 You know full well that I am wholly yours,
 That in myself I have nor power nor will;
 My fate is in your hands, myself your slave;
 Do with me as you would, I can deny
 You nothing: say, what will you I should do?

Clytem. Swear! not to leave these walls ere morning
 dawn.

Ægys. Am I to this compell'd? I swear it then.

CLYTEMNESTRA. ELECTRA. ÆGYSTHUS.

Elec. Calm is the day, the winds have ceas'd their rage;
 Hush'd is the late hoarse murmur of the waves:

Our hope is certainty, to joy is turn'd
 Our ev'ry fear. Already to the port,
 So long desir'd, the Argive prows bear down,
 And their tall masts far as the eye can reach
 Are towering seen, thick as a moving wood.
 Mother! your lord is safe, my father lives.
 They tell me he was first to leap on shore,
 That here in eager joy he speeds, that soon
 He'll reach the gate, perchance is there already.
 Hear you me, mother, and yet stay?

Clytem.

Remember

Your oath, Ægysthus.

Elec.

Will not he too go

With us to welcome home the King of kings?

Clytem. To taunt with bitter words misfortune's ear
 Is a mean triumph, daughter!

Ægys.

It would seem

The fair Electra likes not my poor name,
 Yet knows she not my heart.

Elec.

Your heart? yes, better

Than you may think—would that my blinded mother
 Knew it as well!

Clytem.

This know you, and no more

That he's Thyestes' son: 'tis you are blind
 With fierce ancestral hate which will not see
 How pious, humble and discreet he is,
 How worthy of a better fate and birth,
 Conscious of whose offence he seeks to quit
 Argos for ever, and withdraw himself
 From the proud sight of conquering Agamemnon.

Elec. Then wherefore goes he not? why stay?

Ægys.

I stay

But for a little space—be calm—the sight
 Of him who hates you not, whom you so hate
 Shall with the rising sun no more offend you:
 Electra! I have sworn it to the Queen,
 And I will do it.

Clytem. What a heart of stone
Is in your breast! to the fierce gall wherein
Your words are sprinkled, he opposes naught
But patience, humbleness—

Elec. —I come not here
To fathom the deep virtues he may own.
My duty brings me now, the natural wish
To tell my father's coming, to advise you
In emulous crowds of ev'ry rank and age,
With holiday garments and exulting shouts,
Our citizens are gone to meet him. I
Would long ere now to those dear arms have flown,
But that in this love's sweetest path my foot
Must follow yours; for the first fond embrace
Due to the wife how may the child usurp?
Why do you tarry? Let us go, in us
Delay were now a crime.

Clytem. The mournful state
Of my sick heart is fully known to you,
Yet still you can exult with these harsh blows
To pierce that heart.

Elec. Mother! the Gods well know
Whether I love you, whether pity warms
My breast for you—love, pity, all compel me
To what I do. Would you the King should find
Ægysthus by your side? Longer delay
Will, what you seek to hide, discover. Come!

Ægys. Lady, I do beseech you, go: be not
In your own ruin obstinate.

Clytem. If I went
To certain death, I could not tremble more.
Whence can I courage draw which in his presence
Will not abandon me? He is my lord,
Although I have only in thought betrayed him,
Yet can I not look on him as of old;
Nor can I, will I feign a love I feel not.
O terrible day!

Elec.

O day most fortunate!

Not long and I a mother shall regain;
You feel remorse, you are no longer guilty.

Ægys. Guilty you never were; you did believe
Your husband dead, and, mistress of yourself,
To me design'd your hand. Who then can charge you
With crime for such a thought? He knows it not
If you are silent: guiltless, wherefore fear,
Or in his presence tremble? You will find
No such remorse in him for your slain child.
From his example learn a tranquil air.

Elec. O deadly tongue! thus Agamemnon's name
Dar'st thou to blacken?—Mother! let us go.
Be these the last iniquitous counsels you
Shall hear from him. Ah! come.

Clytem.

Your oath, *Ægysthus*:

Remember, you have sworn.

Ægys.

To stay—one day.

Clytem. Alas! but one.

Elec.

For guilt too long a space.

[*Exeunt Clytem. and Elec.*]

Ægys. Electra hates me, hates me; I abhor
Electra beyond thought; but my deep hate,
As shall be found, is not of idle words
Thrown to the winds; my terrible hate is death.
Abominable race! at length my grasp
Is on you, one and all. What grief, what dread
Was mine, that to the angry waves a prey
Atrides might have fallen; how sweet and large
A part of my revenge had then been lost.
True, with their blood his children would have made
For the foul feast of death by Atreus spread,
Some expiation: thus had I, in part,
Fulfilled the horrible and bloody oath
I took. But now, the father's restoration
From death his children saves. They come, the retinue

Of the triumphant King: away, away!
 To foolish joy the popular places yield;
 Short be the joy I share not: I am here
 Stranger to any feast save one of blood.

[*Exit.*]

AGAMEMNON. CLYTEMNESTRA. ELECTRA.

People. Soldiers.

Aga. At length I see again the long wish'd walls
 Of my own Argos: and again I tread
 The dear soil of my birth: all, whom I see
 Around me are my friends—my daughter, wife—
 My faithful people—and ye, Household Gods!
 Whom yet once more to worship I return.
 What else remains to wish, what more to hope?
 O to an exile heart how sad and irksome
 Are ten long years spent on a foreign shore,
 Remote from all it loves! and O how sweet
 After the pains of bloody war to be
 Again restor'd to the true only port
 Of perfect peace, dear home! You feel not so,
 Or why rejoice I only? Consort, child,
 Silent you stand fixing your restless glances
 Uncertain on the earth. Methinks your joy
 That we again embrace falls short of mine.

Elec. Father!

Clytem. My lord, to-day we have been tried
 By too quick changes—now from hope to grief,
 And then from fear to unexpected joy
 Impell'd by turns. The heart but ill sustains
 Feelings so various and such quick recoil.

Elec. Till now we fear'd for you. From day to day
 Fame spread of you uncertain dreadful news,
 Which made us think the fierce-opposing winds
 That long held empire of the raging sea

Were true indeed, to us a natural cause
 Of heavy grief. But you at last are safe,
 At last from Troy a conqueror you return,
 So much desir'd, desir'd, alas! in vain
 So many anxious moons. O Father dear,
 At last upon this hand, the same kind hand,
 Whereon at your departure a mere child
 I prest mine infant kisses, now I press
 More fervent kisses with maturer lips.
 Hand which mad'st Asia tremble! do not thou
 Disdain the homage of a simple maiden.
 Ah no! sure am I 'tis a sight more sweet,
 Than states subdued and mighty kings o'erthrown,
 To a good father's heart, to view, embrace
 His loving and obedient child again.

Aga. Yes, my girl, yes, far more than glory dear
 To me my blood. Heav'n grant! the sire and spouse
 May be as prosperous as have been and are
 The warrior and the king. Yet not of you,
 But of myself and Fortune I complain:
 The Gods have ta'en from me one daughter: she
 Alone is wanting to her father's heart
 To gladden my return. Jove wills it not!
 And man's eye may not dwell on the dread past.
 You, my Electra, yet remain, to me
 And to your doting desolate mother left:
 Her only comfort and companion, how,
 My gentle daughter! did you share with her
 In my protracted absence the long grief,
 The doubt and anguish? Oh how many days,
 How many nights spent in remembering me!
 And I too in the fierce vicissitudes
 Of military emprise, amid blood,
 'Mid glory and 'mid death, in my mind's eye,
 Your sorrow, fear, suspense and ignorance,
 For me and of me had still present. Oft

In my barr'd helm have I in silence wept,
Tears which none saw; but now our grief is over,
Yet in that clouded brow and eye still moist
I scarce can recognise my dearest wife.

—Why still so sad?

Clytem.

I—sad?

Elec.

If so, with joy,

Whose load when in excess weighs on the heart
As much as grief. O leave her to regain
Her o'erwrought spirits, which recover'd she,
So silent now, will then more freely speak.

Aga. But yet she tells me not of my fair boy,
My young Orestes.

Clytem.

Of Orestes? I—

Elec. He's well, quite well; come and embrace him, father!

Aga. My only hope, Orestes, my throne's heir,
My age's faithful prop, till I have clasp'd thee
A thousand times unto my loving breast,
Not for a single instant will I give
Rest to my wearied frame. Come, dearest wife,
Come and embrace him, that lov'd child of whom
You tell me nothing, you, who gave him birth,
Whom, ten years back, against my will, I left
A weeping infant. Tell me, is he grown?
Resembles he his father? has he yet
Entered the path of virtue? do his eyes
At tale of glorious deeds and flashing arms
With noble and impatient ardour gleam?

Clytem. I can no longer check my tears.

Elec.

Ah! come

Beloved mother! honour'd father come!
And see my pretty brother, my sweet charge.
He is indeed your very image, Sir.
Dear simple age! Oft when he hears us name
His father, he will lisp "*When will he come?*
When shall I see him?" Ever as he hears
Of Troy and arms and foes, in your defence,

As children wont, he ardently desires
In arms to rush and front the perilous war.

Ag. Tell me no more, lead, lead me to my child,
Delay is death to my fond father-heart.

ACT III.

AGAMEMNON. ELECTRA.

Ag. Am I indeed at home? or do I still
Wander among old foes? Electra! ease
Your father's horrid doubt. In mine own palace
Why find I this new welcome? To my wife
How, why am I a stranger grown? Methinks
She might ere now her spirits have regain'd;
Yet still her ev'ry act and word and look
Bear diffidence and art upon them stamp'd.
Am I then grown so odious to her
That in her breast no other feeling wakes
Save terror at my presence? Where, oh where
Those chaste and true embraces? Where those sweet
And simple words? those thousand natural signs
Of fervent love which made my parting hence
So sad, mine absence so severe, so fond
The hope, so ardently desir'd the hour
Of my return? Ah! tell me where are these?
Why these, and more, find I not still in her?

Elec. Sire! Sovereign! for in you such names combine
That in me no less rev'rence you inspire
Than love. Ten years, forlorn and desolate,
Your lady liv'd a prey to keenest grief,
One day is far too short to heal the pains
So long endur'd. Her silence—

Ag.

—How much less

Did her first silence strike me with amaze,
Than now her calm and studied accents wound!
How ill beneath the pomp of words true love

Conceals itself! I would a silence have
 Which, born of love, expresses all; and speaks
 More than the tongue; whose ev'ry gesture gives
 Involuntary witness of the soul.
 But ah! her silence and her speech alike
 Spring not from love. Oh! what avails me now
 The glory I have gain'd? and what the laurels,
 'Mid risks so great and memorable toils,
 Bought with my blood, if I, alas! for these
 Life's chiefest good, my peace of mind, have given?

Elec. Ah! talk not thus, indulge not such a thought;
 All will be well, and soon; as much as lies
 In my poor talent, in my mother's love,
 You shall have perfect peace with us.

Aga. And how
 Is she so different, so unlike herself, become?
 Judge for yourself—but now, some half hour back,
 When she within mine arms Orestes plac'd,
 And I, almost beside myself, bent o'er him,
 Nor could enough satiate my loving heart
 With kissing and embracing him, didst see
 Her seem the least to share my fatherly joy?
 Who from her passionless bearing would have said
 The boy I fondled was our mutual child,
 Our common hope, Orestes, the last pledge
 Of our long love? Or else I greatly err
 Such are not the true irrepressible signs
 Of innocent joy, of a contented heart,
 Such not th' affection of a tender mother,
 Nor such the transports of a loving wife!

Elec. She is, alas! indeed, from what she was
 Some little chang'd: on her has beam'd no ray
 Of pleasure since the fatal day whereon
 My father was compell'd to sacrifice
 Unto the common safety his own child;
 Difficult is the cure of such a wound
 In a fond mother's breast: time has not yet

Drawn from her mind mem'ry of the deceit
Which, kind but cruel, tho' most requisite,
Was us'd to tear her daughter from her arms.

Agd. Woe! woe is me! haply for my more torture
'Tis not enough that I remember this. Was I
Than her, less wretched on that fatal day?
Than she the mother was I less the sire?
And yet, to save her from the furious cries,
From the fierce tumult and the dangerous threats
Of adverse nations to whose rabid ire
A cruel oracle was powerful food,
What could I do? alone, amid so many
Proud kings athirst for glory and revenge,
Hot in dispute, intolerant of restraint,
How could I shield her? prayers and tears are vain
Where bigotry rules—they heard, and pitied not.
For when Jove's angry voice thunders on high
Nature is silent, innocence in vain
Lifts up its anguish. Heav'n alone is heard.

Elec. Ah! vex not with such bitter memories
The happy day of your return, my father.
If on this head I speak, 'tis that I hope
To lessen the just stupor which in you
My mother's strange comportment may produce.
To her old grief, add, that she was too much
Left to herself; that she had none with whom
To ease her heart, except her children, one
Too young the while, and I, perchance, ill fram'd
To tend and temper sorrow, which thus pent
Ever acquires worse bitterness and weight;
For solitude is the death of ev'ry joy,
The life of ev'ry fantasm: then her long
Expectancy of you, her daily dread
For your dear safety—Father! are not these
Causes sufficient that she is not now
The same as erst you knew her? O excuse
Her silence and restraint, banish away

Each gloomy thought. Sorrow will soon in her,
Extinguish'd by that gentle aspect be.

Yes, father, yes, soon will in her return
Tenderness, confidence, love and sweet resources.

Aga. So let me hope at least. O what delight
Were mine, if, openly, as she was wont
She still would bare to me her secret heart!
—But tell me, girl, to Argos, where I reign
Why comes Œgysthus? what expects he here?
This only know I, he is here; methought
That even to name him ev'ry one did shudder.

Elec. His father was Thyestes, Atreus yours;
Hence was the shudder. Fugitive and poor,
Œgysthus, from his hostile brethren, seeks
Asylum here in Argos.

Aga. In that race
Fraternal hatreds are hereditary.
Haply the angry Gods and Atreus' vows
So doom it. But that he should shelter seek
Even from that Atreus' son is something strange.
Therefore have I made order he be brought
Before me. I would see, and from him learn
His life's past fortunes and his present plans.

Elec. That he's unhappy, father, doubt it not:
But you, who, at a glance, pierce ev'ry heart,
Yourself may judge if he deserve his fate.

Aga. Go to, he comes: the exterior's fair. Who knows
What heart, or base or noble, beats within?

AGAMEMNON (*seated*). ELECTRA. ŒGYSTHUS.

Œgys. Can I so vile, without cold trembling, come
Before the glorious conqueror of Troy,
The sublime King of kings? The majesty,
The lofty splendour of a God I see
On that august and terrible forehead beam,
Terrible! yes, yet merciful. The Gods
Oft from their thrones have on the wretched deign'd

To look. Such is *Ægysthus*: yet *Ægysthus*,
 So long the butt of cruel fortune's hate,
 With you had common ancestors: one blood
 Runs in our veins: hence have I in these walls
 Asylum, if not succour, dar'd to seek,
 Which might protect me from my cruel foes,
 Foes that to me, alas! are brothers too.

Aga. I shudder but to think we are indeed
 One blood; for all 'twere better to forget
 The fatal truth. It seems but natural
 Thyestes' children should each other hate;
 Not so that in the palace of their foe
 Asylum they should choose. Unknown to me
 Has been, and is, *Ægysthus*, your true nature;
 I hate you not, nor love, yet—although I
 Would willingly remit all ancient hate—
 I cannot hear you, nor behold, without
 Feeling within my breast I know not what
 Which warns me to avoid you.

Ægys. E'en before
 The tongue gave utterance to the generous thought,
 I knew the great Atrides could not hate.
 Base passions dwell not in the noble breast.
 Yours are th' ancestral virtues not their faults.
 'Tis yours to punish, or—as best may please—
 To pardon who may dare offend your pow'r;
 But he who is, alas! like me unknown,
 Unfortunate, has to your pity rights
 Were he a son of Troy. Greece chose you not
 By chance her captain in the high emprise,
 But that for courtesy, valour, justice, faith,
 A king she saw in you greater than all.
 Such too I think you, and, beneath the shade
 Of your great glory, deem myself most safe,
 Considering, caring nought that I was born
 Thyestes' son, I am misfortune's child,
 In whose long persecution I methinks
 The old stain of my birth have wash'd away.

Therefore tho' now you shudder at my name,
 Yet hope I, when you learn Œgysthus is
 Unfortunate, mendicant, exil'd, oppress'd,
 That, touch'd by pity, in your kingly breast
 Feelings more kind for his sad lot may rise.

Aga. And were I so inclin'd to give, would you
 Consent to take my pity?

Œgys.

What am I

That I should dare despise your gift?

Aga. (rising.)

You are

My house's natural enemy, the son
 Of our worst foe: you hate me and should hate.
 Nor do I therefore blame you, for our sires
 Have plac'd between us an eternal gulf
 Of severing hatred; not for us alone
 But for our latest sons. I see in you
 Thyestes and his furies; and can you
 With other eyes behold me? Seem I not
 The living image of the bloody Atreus?
 Oh! can you stand within these walls which yet
 Are crimson with your brethren's blood, nor feel
 Your own, in ev'ry vein, boil for revenge?

Œgys. Horrid, but just, was the revenge of Atreus!
 Grievous the offence, the punishment severe!
 You'll tell me they were brothers; true, most true;
 They were, but to forget it which was first?
 My hapless sire! Therefore, perchance, to me
 Heav'n still is hostile: your less guilty race
 Is blest with ev'ry good. Thyestes gave
 Me other brothers who are not, like me,
 Of incest born; I have from them no spouse
 Seduc'd and spoil'd: yet are they worse my foes
 Than ever was your father Atreus: they
 Have barr'd me from the throne, robb'd me of all
 My share in our dead father's heritage:
 Nay more, their cruelty which took before
 The means whereby I liv'd, now seeks my life.
 Had I not cause of flight?

Aga.
But to flee here was wrong.

'Twas wise to flee,

Ægys. I bear with me,
Where'er I bend my step, the infamy
Of my paternal name and guilty birth :
But where, where should I feel less pain to speak
Thyestes' name than in Atrides' ear ?
You, if with glory less your lot was crown'd,
You, if you were unfortunate like me,
Would then too feel the shame, the horror feel
Which equally attaches to the son
Of Atreus as Thyestes: in my woes
Judge what your own too might have been; and let
Atrides do with me, as he would have
Others should do to him, were he Ægysthus.

Aga. Ægysthus I? Never! tho' adverse fate
With tenfold ills had vex'd me, would my foot
Have turn'd to seek compassion from my foe.
A voice within me cries, that I no more
Should lend an ear, and shut my heart to pity.
But as you seek it, and I never use
To make denial, I will strive—so far
As with the Greeks my name and pow'r avail—
To reinstate you in your father's place.
Meanwhile retire from Argos; with you near
My nights must restless be, my days unblest:
One city may not hold us; and, perchance,
Even in the bounds of Greece we yet are left
Too near.

Ægys. Can you thus drive me from your sight?
What think you me?

Aga. Your sire.

Ægys. Enough!

Aga. Too much:

Away! nor let the morning find you here.
You shall have aid, my aid, when you are gone.

[Exit Ægys.]

ELECTRA. AGAMEMNON.

Aga. Would'st credit it, Electra? I did feel
A strange cold fear creep through me at his sight
As I ne'er felt before.

Elec. 'Twas well, my father,
Thus to dismiss him: I too never see him
Without the same sick fear.

Aga. Our cruel sires
In characters of blood have stamp'd in us
A mutual mortal hate. Reason in me
May, haply, curb it, nothing can efface.

ELECTRA. AGAMEMNON. CLYTEMNESTRA.

Clytem. Ah why, my lord, your loyal people's hope
Protract with new delays. The solemn priest
Already by the sacred altar waits,
Whence the rich incense whitely wreaths on high.
The ways, which to the temple lead, with flow'rs
Are freshly strewn, where men in nations press,
As wave on wave, whose loud untiring throats
Make Heav'n resound with lov'd Atrides' praise.

Aga. Ere now my own desire, my people's love,
Had I indulged, but, longer than I thought,
Or, haply, wish'd, parleying with this Ægysthus
Has here detained me.

Clytem. With Ægysthus?

Aga. Ay,

And even that brief commerce something mov'd me.
Not in himself, that there is ground of fear,
Nor that he comes to Argos for our harm;
Yet springs he from a race fatal to mine,
And in the festal homage and free love
That welcome my return in triumph home,
His thought sits heavy on my shadowed soul.
Black omens hang upon that austere brow
And strangely glare in his wild brilliant eye.

It matters not. To-morrow he goes hence.
 Meantime let perfect joy here revel. While
 I seek the temple, there to bless the Gods
 For my long trials safely past, to pray
 That they be still propitious to my fortunes,
 Grant me, dear wife, to see at my return
 That fair face brighten'd with its old sweet smile;
 'Twas once to me the pledge of blessed peace,
 Nor can I happy be till it returns. [Exit.

ELECTRA. CLYTEMNESTRA.

Elec. Good king and better husband! both spoke there,
 Grant Heav'n! not all in vain.

Clytem. I am betray'd!
 Electra, do you thus observe your faith?
 Alas! you have discovered to the King
 Ægysthus—

Elec. No, I have not even nam'd him.
 Elsewhere my sire had learn'd it. All compete
 To win his favour in a thousand ways,
 All wish and watch to make themselves of use.
 I marvel that he knew it not before!

Clytem. But what suspects he? wherefore drive him hence?
 You heard what your sire asked, and he replied;
 Spoke the King aught of me?

Elec. Mother, be calm!
 Suspicion is not in Atrides' breast.
 He dreams not you are false, or can forget:
 Yours be the care never to wrong this love.
 His words, wherein he parley'd with Ægysthus,
 Betoken'd not a foe.

Clytem. Then why so soon
 From Argos banish him?

Elec. O blessed haste!
 Which saves you from the ruinous brink that yawn'd
 For your one onward step.

Clytem. And he, he goes?

Elec. When he is gone your secret will be safe.
Yet have you, all in all, your husband's love,
And his ambition aims but at your heart.
The venomous tongues of base and busy spies
Not yet have fil'd his whole and trusting mind;
But ah! if mutual love, and peace, and faith
Seem but in you to waver, their sharp eyes
Will spy the flaw, their vile arts swell the strife,
And all the dark tale quickly stun his ear.
Ah! mother, if compassion for yourself,
For us, for this Ægysthus, move you aught,
Bid him depart: elsewhere he may be safe
From the King's anger.

Clytem. If I lose Ægysthus
What rests to fear?

Elec. Dishonour, sure and deep.

Clytem. True, terrible! so leave me to my fate.

Elec. Not so, my mother, yet despair not.

Clytem. Leave me!

Innocent child of a doom'd guilty mother!
I will not shame your purity, nor breathe
Again in that chaste ear Ægysthus' name;
You may not share my guilty sighs; alone,
With my own thoughts and with the fatal flame
Which all devours me I would now retire.
Follow me not, Electra; here, farewell. [*Exit Clytem.*]

Elec. Me miserable! miserable mother! O
How dire a cloud now blackens o'er our heads!
Grant Heav'n! it bode not ruin to our house.

ACT IV.

Clytem. He is gone at last; I am once more alone
To think, where, whether Mem'ry on the past,
Or Fancy on the doubtful future dwells,
All thought is torture, and all reasoning vain.

Why, why is duty so oppos'd to love,
 Why, why are happiness and honour foes?
 My husband on that side, my heart on this—
 Ægysthus here, unfriended, weak, obscure,
 Misfortune's victim and suspicion's mark,
 Despis'd, oppress'd, to cruel exile doom'd—
 Here Agamemnon, haughty, full of hate,
 Strong in the public love, with glory crown'd,
 And absolute of pow'r to work his will—
 Each foe to each and claiming both my love—
 On this hand want and scorn, to mar my joy,
 Make but the tempter dearer to my soul—
 On that pow'r, wealth, respect to gild my woe
 But show their lord more hateful in my view;
 Yet him too I lov'd once, in my blind youth,
 Him must I love again or feign to love,
 And him forsake whom it is death to lose.
 No middle path 'twixt shame and misery lies,
 Misery most exquisite, whose only end
 Is in the grave; shame deep, but oh! retrieved
 By grateful love and pleasures shar'd with him.
 Here dawns some hope, here is some comfort left;
 I fear to fix, yet, fearing, fix me here.

CLYTEMNESTRA. ÆGYSTHUS.

Ægys. Lady, I come to make my last farewell;
 The step my free will prompted me to choose,
 Pow'r now compels; I must depart, and quickly.
 I grieve not I have stayed, obeying you,
 Nor think I of the shame I have thereby met;
 By your command, and for your love, endur'd,
 To me 'tis welcome, if approv'd by you.
 Other, far other grief consumes my heart,
 The thought of leaving you, without one hope
 That ever we on earth shall meet again.

Clytem. I feel, Ægysthus, I deserve reproach,
 More so that from your lips I none receive.

Me too your grief, your cruel fate afflicts;
 For me you bear this shame: and I for you
 Am ready to bear all, wrong, want and death,
 Nay, worse, disgrace. Think you then I could leave you?
 While life is lent me, that can never be.

Ægys. That life may long be lent you, yield to Fate,
 Nor rashly in my fall involve your own:
 Vain the attempt, and hopeless, to resist
 The absolute power of your despotic lord:
 Arms are his reasons and his will is law!

Clytem. If not resist, we may deceive or try,
 It is his order you depart at dawn;
 That dawn shall see me partner of your way.

Ægys. I do beseech you, talk not, think not thus;
 Dear tho' to me your love, dearer your fame:
 Nay cease, I cannot, will not have it so:
 The day would come, tardy, belike, but cruel
 When even yourself would name me as the cause
 Of your disgrace. O far less hard to bear
 Were torture, banishment, or death—whereto
 Torn from your sight my passage must be short—
 Than such reproaches from your lips to hear.

Clytem. Such would you never hear, be then at ease!
 Sole cause for which I live, how could I ever
 Reproach you as the cause of my disgrace?
 My guilt is on my head, but you will be
 Cause of my death if thus you scorn my pray'r.

Ægys. I were indeed its cause could I consent:
 —Grant our flight made, whither could we withdraw
 From the relentless wrath of wrong'd Atrides?
 What shelter, and what shield against his arm?
 Is Helen's story and her spoiler's fate
 So soon forgot? He was a powerful prince,
 The stolen fair in his own kingdom lodg'd,
 Arm'd hosts, and lofty towers, wealth, strength were his,
 But what did they avail? By open force,
 In his storm'd palace, 'neath his father's eye,

Before the sacred altars, amid cries,
 And groans and blood, and threats of succouring friends,
 Lost he not all, his prey, 'his land, his life?
 Destitute of all aid, exil'd, obscure,
 Can I do more? Lady, the hope is vain,
 Following it you win the shame alone
 Of ignominious unsuccessful flight,
 And I, awhile possessing you to lose,
 The ravisher's foul name and fitting death.
 —Such is our certain fate if we persist!

Clytem. Fear makes these obstacles and swells our risk;
 When did true love look to the dark side only?

Ægys. When did true love ruin the thing it lov'd?
 Were the risk only mine I would nor count
 Nor care what obstacles I met in the path.
 But here I see you careless of your life,
 Preferring silly passion to fair fame;
 I am not worthy of such tenderness.

—True, I have lov'd you, and, be Heav'n my judge!
 If I could aught to bring you peace, to close
 The wounds wherewith that fatal love has torn
 Your gentle breast, all would I give, save love;
 'Twere easier far to die than that resign.
 But if, at manifest risk, your life and fame,
 For me, in mine own spite, must be endangered,
 Seek we, at least, means surer of success.

Clytem. Surer? Where are they?

Ægys. To depart, to die,

These are the only means which I can see.
 Freed from my presence, vex'd by no vain hope
 Of seeing me again, soon from your heart
 Will fade all thought of me; far other love
 Will great Atrides kindle: by his side,
 Blessing and blest, your life will yet glide smoothly.
 Heav'n grant it be so! I can give no proof
 Sincerer of my love than this, the last
 Terrible cruel proof of my departure.

Clytem. To die is in man's pow'r whene'er he wills it;
—But is this our sole hope, our single chance?

Ægys. Yes, there may be, there is, one other—but
It is unworthy—cruel too—though sure.

Clytem. Speak on.

Ægys. You know not what you ask, I cannot.

Clytem. You go not hence till I do know your heart:
Your secret, for there is such, I will have.

I am advanced too far to turn or pause;

Something already may my lord suspect,

And I have giv'n him cause for worse than doubt.

In active hate is my sole safety now;

I will not, dare not, share his home again.

Then teach me, sweet *Ægysthus*, this one way

In following which I may his pow'r escape.

Ægys. Escape his pow'r, absolute in all Greece?

I told you 'twas impossible but now.

Clytem. Aye, but you hinted since some other plan;

And that methought would aid, assure our flight:

What meant you if not this? What more remains

Which I must do?

Ægys. Nothing—that is—I mean—
Nothing which should be done—and least by you.
Farewell.

Clytem. O mighty and avenging Jove!

Is, is it come to this? I see it all;

The horrible light breaks on my darken'd mind;

I understand you now. The remedy

Is cruel—you did say as much—but sure;

You told me so—the only one, too true!

And this—this remedy—our single chance—

Is my Lord's blood. Ah! no, no, ask not that.

Ægys. O rise. I do not ask it, nay forbid:

True to our love, and to our lives, his life

Is the sole obstacle. And, as was natural,

Thus doom'd to exile, guilty of no crime,

Despair, at losing you, prompted to love

Many suggestions, this among the rest,
 But only to my thought, not to my wish:
 So fear not that I e'er in truth indulg'd
 Such plan of act; sacred to you his life
 From me is safe. Is it consistent then
 That I, with thoughts like these, would ask his death,
 And ask from you, whose duty, wish should be
 To love, to honour, to defend his life,
 And, most of all, from me, his natural foe?
 —But these are themes which ill befit us now;
 Lady, be firm; this, this is our last hour;
 O let not aught disturb then our farewell
 With the bitter thought that we part less than friends.

Clytem. Give me your hand; what is't you say of parting?
 —Sole obstacle unto our love and lives,
 Went it not so? Ay, true! he is the sole:
 Him dead we live, and in his life we die.

Ægys. I pray you dwell not so upon my words:
 Give them no care: banish them from your mind.
 Love loos'd my tongue to speak, with good intent,
 And if I therein err'd, be that my pardon.
 For, I confess me, when I saw your love
 Reckless, to reason blind, rushing on ruin,
 All other arguments weak to restrain,
 I sought, and did allow, you to compel,
 As from my heart, the knowledge from my lips
 Of this extreme, yet sole, alternative;
 Knowing that thus your delicate virtue, shock'd
 By the very guilt and blackness of the thought,
 Would then be easier brought to pause, to seek
 The sole path wherein now your safety lies,
 The path of duty, honour, prudence, peace,
 And, me abandoning to the will of Fate,
 Forget that such a wretch e'er lov'd or liv'd.

Clytem. The love which loos'd your tongue to speak the
 words,
 Quickened my ears to hear, my heart to weigh them.

And, though the means, whereby we must arrive
At freedom, make me shudder, is it not sweet
To know that then we shall be free to love?

Ægys. And would you have the heart?

Clytem.

I have the love

Not to fear any thing or man in the world!
The thought of losing you, like a sharp poison,
Eats at my soul: I could bear all, but that:
Yet that too must I bear. Would I were dead!
We will talk more of this, not now. And hear,
Meet me—hush, hush! My children: they are his too.

Elec. (within.) This way, this way my brother, follow me.
See! the gates open, down the temple steps
The people from the sacrifice descend,
But still, descending, turn the eye on him
Their so long absent, late recover'd Chief.
And lo! he comes, our noble father comes,
And, from the marble porch, moves, godlike, down:
Now, as he graceful mounts the stately car,
Their glad shouts give his name to the echoing skies,
And garlands wave, and many-colour'd banners
Flaunt on the air, and joyful music sounds.
'Tis a fair sight when thus a nation's love
Rewards a monarch's worth. To merit such,
Brother, be thou like him, I ask no more.
Come, let us forth, and welcome their return.

Clytem. By this way may they pass; we must retire.
It were not good thus to be found together.
At midnight we will meet again. Ere that
I shall have ordered matters for our flight:
Gainsay me not, our flight. The other plan
Holds not. Farewell. At midnight, here. Remember,
Flight, nothing more.

Ægys. Sure failure and quick fall!

Flight is impossible. His death or ours.

[*Exit Clytem. with Ægys.*

Ægys. (returning.) It works not yet. My shaft has miss'd
its mark:

Yet she had almost yielded, or so seem'd,
But for these children: curses on the chance
Which brought them here! She heard me, and replied,
In fear and grief, more than in wrath or horror:
It cannot all have fail'd, the thing may hold:
She has that in her which will never rest;
Her mind is made familiar with the thought:
And her heart, as a storehouse lodg'd with fuel,
Needs but a spark to fire it to revenge.
Guilt and Remorse, Love, Hatred, Fear, Despair,
Violent feelings all, and prompting each
To sudden courses, these contend in her;
And, where are these, 'tis still the last which sways.
Be it mine to spur them on to needful action.
But how, how? Let me see. To make her think
Her love is slighted of! Atrides brings
A captive princess in his train from Troy,
Cassandra is she call'd, young, tempting, fair;
They have been long, must have been much, together;
Her woes, her charms in his considerate heart,
No doubt, found pity which grew, shortly, love.
Why! 'tis most likely. Would the Queen were here!
—But we will meet at midnight; be it so,
Such dark hour best befits such deadly blow. [Exit.]

AGAMEMNON. CLYTEMNESTRA.

Aga. Nay, hold not back, sweet wife! Absent so long,
So lately reunited, Love has much
To ask, to tell, to give and to receive.
Wherefore so silent? Why, when I draw near,
Coldly retire amid your handmaid train?

I must be sadly changed. There was a time
 Whenever I went out, whene'er returned,
 Those eyes were moist with tears, or bright with joy;
 Now into their clear depths I look all vainly:
 Those sweet interpreters of love are gone;
 And, in their stead, I find reserve and doubt.
 What has gone wrong? my subjects, were they true?
 My children dutiful? or, it may be,
 You are not well, love?

Clytem.

Yes, Sir, well, quite well.

Aga. That sigh belies the speech. Some secret care,
 Some heavy sorrow weighs upon your heart,
 And on your brow is character'd in gloom.
 To whom, if not to me, should it be told?
 Whate'er its source, who better can than I
 Remove, relieve, or, at least, share it with you?
 Your pale lips move, but speak not; and your eyes
 Motionless glare, brimful of tears, which fall not.
 Great Heav'n! then she spoke true—my girl was right.

Clytem. Was right! what said she? spoke she ill of me?
 'Twere not unlikely—I have found her ever
 A spy upon my life, sententious, cold,
 Obstinate of just reproof, whose bitter memory
 Makes her now court a milder judge in you.

Aga. Oh! you do wrong her; she is kind as fair;
 Nothing breathes in her but what's good and pure.
 Hers is no tongue to utter ill of you,
 Nor mine the ear to listen your dispraise;
 'Tis true you were our theme, in part, at least,
 Tho' we did speak, besides, of many things;
 And most were sweet to hear; but, as on earth,
 No good there is by evil unalloyed,
 No sweet in which some bitter does not mingle,
 Something there was which vex'd me with strange fears
 And doubts unwelcome—Nay, love, not of you—
 This stranger, this *Cegysthus*—

Clytem.

—What of him?

Haply—for I did pity his distress,
 And cheer'd, wherein I could, his friendless exile—
 Electra, who has ever been his foe,
 Dutiful to you ev'n in her hate of him,
 Condemns such mercy and reports him dangerous.
 Fear, good my lord, is ever credulous,
 And where we hate we easily suspect.
 Yet where's his pow'r? his sentence is pronounced;
 To-morrow he departs in banishment;
 He has no wish of harm, let him go safe;
 Else, 'twill be said in fearing thing so vile
 Great Agamemnon doth belie his name.

Aga. You do mistake me; 'tis not that I fear him,
 To feel that he must hate me, and would harm,
 Were the time ripe: but, as we move aside
 The noisome reptile black'ning in our path,
 So do I him, for his sight likes me not,
 And the evil spirit, which is in ev'ry breast,
 Stirs mine, to thoughts which pair not with my greatness.
 We are born foes: he stands within my pow'r;
 Let him go hence, lest I, perchance, abuse it;
 He has fear'd my daughter too—let him go hence.

Clytem. These are, indeed, reasons that he should go,
 Yet scarcely of sufficiency that we
 Should send him hence without the help he pray'd for.

Aga. Nor do we—nothing will I change my mind;
 The succour I did promise he shall have.
 Strange! that he should have sunk so low to need it;
 Most strange! that he should ask it at my hands.
 In this we see the certain sting of sin;
 Its curse and consequence fix not alone
 Upon ourselves, but to our latest sons
 Descend, in shame and sorrow. O! that man
 Would recollect this truth, so might he pause
 On the dizzy brink whence Passion leads to crime.
 Yet, upon earth, if conscience keeps for Guilt,
 One pang, one torture keener than the rest,

Surely 'tis this—to be condemned to seek,
To find relief where we have injured deeply.

Clytem. Excellent words, my lord; just now most noble,
Please you to act on them. Here is Ægysthus,
Born to a throne, most fitted to adorn it;
In mind of dispositions fair, in person
Boasting all goodly qualities to please;
Showing much virtue, of all vice suspect;
Deserving happiness, to misery doom'd;
His fate to need, yet to receive no pity,
Even from you, who were not once so harsh.
Sure, I have said enough. O put in use
The godlike privilege of kings, be merciful,
Forgive him, serve him; else 'twill be indeed,
To visit on the child the father's sin.

Aga. It seems you know him well then, you so praise him!
And, I remind me now, you nothing told me
That he was here, in Argos. Was this right?

Clytem. My silence was, methinks, but prudence, where
My speech had only served to conjure up
The guilty phantoms of the ungrateful past,
Unsettling with false doubts your equal spirit.

Aga. Ever my kind sage wife, to keep unknown
The evil thing Love may not all undo!
And but for this I check'd you, for my good
That you were silent; and, at once, forgot
That you are not, as we, of Atreus' blood,
But of a foreign and more fortunate stock.
The horror, hate and fear which thrills in us,
At the sole thought of that incestuous race,
Extreme, instinctive, holds not your free mind.
Be this the pardon of my hasty words.

Clytem. Nay, this I meant not; but Electra—

Aga.

She

Has told me all.

Clytem. Told all? O death! And thus
He still speaks to me. (*aside.*)

Aga. Yes! Electra has
Reveal'd to me the source of all your grief.

Clytem. I understand; she said—

Aga. What, of yourself
You should have said, at once, without a blush,
That ever in your heart the bitter memory
Lives of our victim child.

Clytem. Of Iphigene?
—Yet breathe I: Yes, ah yes! That day to me
Must ever more be hateful.

Aga. Yet, what more
Can I now, thereon, speak, to you unknown?
In ev'ry heart, save yours, I pity find
For my misfortune: but, if my reproach
May aught relieve your unextinguish'd grief,
Be angry as you will, pour on, for I'll
Bear all and blench not, though I none deserve.
If tears, a mother's tears, may end it, weep;
I too, if e'en our tears may mix, will weep.
And, though they mingle not, I'll yet weep on.
Sad Memory drooping o'er that dear one's tomb
Shall own our sorrows equal, if not one.
But, my own wife, this alone should not cause
Your silence and estrangement. Ah! if aught
Of doubt or of displeasure have crept in
Between our hearts, speak, I could better bear
Your open anger than a stinted love.

Clytem. To you that I seem chang'd, makes me not so;
And seem I so, may it not be that you
Are changed yourself, seeing with other eyes.
The pangs of absence greater are, the chance
Of change is less in her who stays behind,
True to one dream, renewing one desire,
Than his, from sea to shore, who, roaming finds,
Where'er he fix his tent or bend his sail,
Eyes sparkling welcome, scenes which woo his stay.

Aga. You wrong me, wrong me now and ever. What!

To Clytemnestra, to my country false?
 Be Heav'n and Hell my witness! Troy and Greece!
 By pray'rs invok'd—by sacrifice appeas'd—
 Her blazing ruins—and our kings restor'd—
 Honour ne'er won me on as Love woo'd back.
 Witness my anxious days, my armour'd sleep,
 My cares in council, camp, my risk afield,
 If ever I, in aught, ambitioned more
 My personal glory than the general good,
 The pride of pow'r before the joys of peace.
 A deed was to be done—I was Heav'n's tool.
 A deed was to be done—I left my land,
 I brought my friends, gave soldiers, ships and gold,
 Gave e'en my child, when Jove required her blood;
 And, credit me, in all I strove and slav'd,
 Suffer'd and sacrificed, one aim was mine,
 How best, in working HIS high will, to speed
 My country's triumph, my own home return.

Clytem. I know your noble nature and deep faith,
 And, far and long by Fate tho' sever'd, I
 Ne'er doubted your heart's love was mine alone,
 As mine is wholly yours. But, meeting thus,
 Joy leaps the weary waste of widowed years,
 O'erlooks in the glad now the dark between,
 Hopes what it held before to have again,
 Bright, warm and young, felt fully, all our own.
 But ah! it may not be; we did forget
 That time has touch'd us both, and sorrow tried,
 And yet, scarce waken'd, half suspect our hearts
 And looks are chang'd alike. Love knows not years.

Aga. Look ever on me thus. And though my heart
 Felt not, what still it strongly, deeply feels,
 I would believe it is so; for the truth
 Can scarce be dearer than is now the dream.

Clytem. Nay now, as you misjudge me, were I cold
 To former joys, or slow to love restor'd,
 Might I not ask, e'en in that sweetest phrase,

Which is the traitor more when lips and heart
 Link in one breath, weigh in one scale alike,
 The dream and truth, the substance and the shade?
 —Cease we, Atrides, then. Nor word nor look,
 Alone thus taken, show the loyal heart.
 Present or past, what we have felt and feel,
 The trusting tranquil future best may prove.

Aga. I have no fear. For me that future beams
 With sweetest hope and promise of full joy.
 Greece now avenged, each foreign foe subdued,
 Remains but to enjoy our fame in peace,
 Whose gentle olive wreathing our bruised arms
 Shall hide War's bloody dints, while in her train
 Follow the wakened Muse, the kindling Arts,
 And, where she treads, glad plenty pours her horn,
 Fleets part, and cities spread, and the just throne
 Is prov'd and propt by free and happy hearts.
 These now our weightiest cares, 'twere easy sure
 —With Jove's continual blessing sought in pray'r,
 With thine, my children's and my country's love—
 In hearts like ours for happiness to thrive,
 As seeds in a good soil. So shall it be,
 And our life's day, though clouds obscur'd its noon,
 Cheerful and calm, in brightest evening close!

Clytem. (aside.) Me guilty, these to me! Would he
 but curse

'Twere some excuse! but thus to love me still!

(As throwing herself at his feet.) My lord, my husband.

Aga. Nay love! to my heart,
 Thine own old resting place, thence never more
 To part till death.

Clytem. Till death? how soon and whose?

(Shouts are heard.)

What concourse and what shouts are these?

Aga. They bring
 From my full ships the spoils of fallen Troy;
 Corn, oil and ivory, jewels and gold,

Marbles and myrrh, cedar and curious arms,
 Silks from the Tyrian loom, horses of Thrace,
 Nile's scarce-tam'd lion, Ida's snow-white bulls,
 The scythed chariot and the harnessed slave;
 Leaders of hosts there led, kings crownless now;
 And Phrygia's rifled flowers, matron and maid,
 Pale in whose prisoned ranks, vain virgin she!
 Princess and prophetess, Cassandra chants
 Her wild and warning rhyme to deafen'd ears.
 Strange sad vicissitude! She who late fed
 Delicately in her royal father's halls
 Parentless, landless, desolate, captive now.
 Youth, beauty, genius, innocence, all hers!
 Weak shelter against War's old iron rule.
 Haply less wretched than her lot is cast
 With those who will not her high happy estate
 In this her fallen misery forget.
 Her charms, her virtues and misfortunes soon
 Will win my Clytemnestra, your kind heart,
 And all the mistress soften in the friend.

Clytem. You speak as from the heart, warmly, and well!
 A dangerous rival, merits she this praise?

Aga. Your truest, trustiest handmaid, this alone! [*Exeunt.*]

ACT V.

(*ELECTRA and CEGYSTHUS meeting—the latter withdraws.*)

Elec. He shuns me. So far well! but in his mien
 For one to exile doom'd, methinks the air
 Too fearless and secure. Within, the Queen
 Shows more of desperate rage than shame or grief.
 O heaven! who knows how with his hellish art
 That villain has enthrall'd her, and impels
 To what worst crime? I shudder as I think!

Ah! whither shall I turn, how act? I lose
A mother, if I speak, and speak I not—

(*Agamemnon enters.*) Tell me, my father, have you seen
the Queen?

Aga. But now, we spoke together, where we stand;
She will return anon.

Elec. My father, still
Cegysthus is in Argos.

Aga. The whole day
You heard that I allow'd him; 'twill soon end!
But say, my child, what thought disturbs you thus,
Wherefore that anxious look and pallid cheek?
Ever, as if to speak, your tongue takes up
Cegysthus' name, then pauses.

Elec. I would have him
At once hence banish'd, though I scarce know why.
For one who, haply, waits but time and place
To harm, a single night is long: the night
Is wont to be the cloak of every crime.
It may be foolish, father, but O grant
My earnest pray'r that he depart ere dawn.

Aga. What! is he then our foe? against our house
Plots he?

Elec. Of plots I know not. But enough
That he's *Thyestes'* son! At heart I feel
A secret presage hang with fatal weight:
Haply in me fear something may exceed,
But, though I fail to paint it and scarce know,
Not therefore to be scorn'd as without cause.
Be wary then, I pray. While I return
To my old post, by dear *Orestes'* side,
Ponder on this, the sooner he is gone,
The sooner we shall peace and safety know. [*Exit.*]

Aga. Spirit of *Atrous!* How, transfus'd in one
With the life-blood, thine old implacable hate
Lives in thy grandchild. At *Thyestes'* name
She trembled. And what marvel, e'en when I,

Troy's conqueror, shuddering paus'd to find him near,
 That she, a simple girl, quails at his sight.
 But, if he plot?—Why, let him, my one nod
 Would crumble him and all his plots in dust.
 To arm on fear, punish on mere suspicion,
 Hasting, a few brief hours, his sentenc'd exile
 Were vile and cruel too. And though I fear,
 Not his the fault, nor should he bear the pain. [Exit.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Midnight! He sleeps, and to his dreaming breast
 Folds the false wife that shuns his loving side.
 Midnight! Ere morning dawn we must be far.
 Atrides, waking to a widow'd bed
 And desolate children, asks of whispering slaves
 The wife he never shall see more. In that
 Less guilty than his death. Shall this my hand,
 Once pledg'd to him in faith and chastest love,
 Against his life now arm itself? Ah no!
 (Yet strange, Cassandra said he should so die)
 Foot, hand, heart, all there tremble. How in me
 All courage with Œgysthus disappears,
 And of my horrible crime alone I see
 The immense atrocity! athwart my mind
 Atrides' bloody spectre singly stalks:
 In vain do I accuse him. His sole crime
 To be my husband; therefore sent by me
 From the arms of quiet sleep to death's cold arms.
 Where should I after hide, how hope for peace?
 What horrid life of tears, remorse and rage!
 And, the deed done, for whom 'twas done would e'en
 Œgysthus self love me, the murd'ress? Or
 Lie by this infamous side in bloody bed,
 Nor tremble for himself? O! of my shame
 And worst damnation horrible instrument, far,

Far from my sight, accurs'd and deadly steel;
 Rather than thy red ministry let me lose
 Lover and life at once. Not by my hand
 —So far at least her prophecy shall fail—
 Shall such a hero fall. Honour of Greece,
 Terror of Asia, live to glory! live
 For thy loved children, for a better wife!
 —But who, with stealthy foot, thro' shrouding night,
 Hitherward comes? *Ægysthus!* Then all's lost!

Ægys. (enters.) Hast done the deed?

Clytem. Softly! here, here. I am ready.

Quick, let's begone!

Ægys. Whither? to ruin? Fool! (*aside*)

This is no time for trembling or for tears;
 Remorse is too late now, flight is in vain.
 Our lives hang on a thread, one moment makes
 Or mars us. We must do or die. And when
 Each nerve to the great act is needed most
 Thus, Clytemnestra, pale and prostrate, shows
 Her promis'd courage, her great heart—

Clytem.

—*Ægysthus*

Spare me! I cannot.

Ægys.

Well, I told you so,

When you first hinted it, that for the proof
 You were unequal, that your heart would fail.
 I am glad that you've repented: from that guilt
 To know you free will cheer my dying hour.
 Heav'n grant! the very thought of such a crime
 May not be fatal. I return, by stealth,
 Beneath night's favouring shades, myself to tell you,
 However spar'd as yet, that my poor head
 Now doom'd to the revenge of your lord-king
 Irrevocably falls.

Clytem.

Whence had you this?

Ægys. More than he would, Atrides of our love
 Has heard already; and he now commands
 That I from Argos move not, till again,

At early morn, before him I appear :
 To me such parley sentence is of death.
 But fear not, I will practise every art
 To draw his anger on myself alone.

Clytem. What! knows he all?

Ægys. Too much; one chance remains,
 Safer and better still: I may evade
 By voluntary death this perilous proof,
 And thus your honour save, e'en while I free
 Myself from infamous death. For this I came,
 To give my last advice, your last farewell.
 To take; O live then, and unsullied may
 Your fame live with you. This your flattering pity
 No longer waste on me, supremely blest
 May I but die for you by my own hand.

Clytem. How, at thy words, rekindles in my bosom
 Its late extinguish'd passion! But, thy death—
 Can it be true?

Ægys.

Certain.

Clytem.

And I, I slay thee!

Ægys. But you will be preserv'd!

Clytem.

From black Avernus

What grisly fury on thy fateful steps
 Attends, *Ægysthus*? I had died of grief
 Had I not once more seen thee: but at least
 Innocent I had died: now, at thy sight,
 Despite myself, anew am I impell'd
 To the horrible crime, at whose unnatural thought
 Thrills with mysterious awe my anguish'd frame.
 But is it so? Have we no other course?
 Who has disclosed our love?

Ægys.

Who, save *Electra*,

Would dare address her father on that head?
 None, none but she could name it to the King.
 She plants the dagger in your breast, and kills
 First honour and then life.

Clytem.

I cannot credit it.

Ægys. Credit it then, if my lips be unsafe,
At my sword's point. Let me, at least, make sure
By dying now.

Clytem. Nay hear me! sheathe your sword.
Perhaps Atrides has not yet resolved—

Ægys. Perhaps! Atrides, injur'd and a King,
Meditates only in his haughty mind
Revenge and blood. Perhaps! Is it still so?
My death is sure, tho', perhaps, doubtful yours,
And if he spare it, wherefore will he spare?
Ah! think, were I but seen to enter here,
Alone, so late—how dangers thicken round us!
Soon will the dawn, that dawn I may not wait,
Arise to free you from this horrid doubt.
Ere then I am resolv'd to die: Farewell
For ever!

Clytem. Stay! thou shalt not die.

Ægys. Why no,
Save by my hand, or, haply, yours, I die not.
Come, strike the blow, here, home; and drag me then
Breathless and mangled to yon cruel judge.
My blood were full acquittal for your crime.

Clytem. Cruel Ægysthus! Maddening thought! What I?

Ægys. Why! what a hand is yours which neither serves
Him whom you hate to kill, nor whom you love.
Mine own shall stead me then.

Clytem. Ah! no.

Ægys. You would have
Me or Atrides dead: choose which, and quickly.

Clytem. Terrible choice! yet O too needful crime!

Ægys. Time presses.

Clytem. Courage—strength—

Ægys. —Strength, courage, all,
Love will supply.

Clytem. Must I, with trembling hand,
My treasonous weapon in his trusting heart,
In his, my children's sire, my loving lord—

Ægys. —Your children's sire, your loving lord? O true!
 Your children's sire—Who butcher'd Iphigene?
 Your loving lord—He never left your side
 For ten long years. When rich Lyrnessus fell,
 Others, for him, Chryseis might enjoy
 Or woo the rare Briseis for their own.
 Your loving lord! truly he loves you well,
 He who from rifled Ilium in his train
 Brings a rich bevy of her brightest dames,
 Favourite of whom for beauty as for birth,
 Lodg'd in his highest hall, your special trust,
 Yon jewell'd slave—

Clytem.

—Cassandra!

Ægys.

Ay, Cassandra!

Lovely and youthful! At her delicate feet
 Not now the King of men, but his slave's slave,
 The conqueror conquer'd, Agamemnon pines,
 Troy, Greece, and all, himself and you forgotten.
 Weary of you, pleased with this newer toy,
 Soon will he share with her his crown and bed;
 And you the while, his patient pattern wife,
 Wait meekly till his heavy hand shall heap
 Disgrace on injury, you alone unmov'd
 Where else all Argos rises in reproach,
 And murmurs shame.

Clytem.

Vain virgin! Beauty—youth—

His very words thus prais'd her. And to me,
 So low in level now, likens he her?

Ægys. Likens? say rather he prefers!

Clytem.

He dies!

Ægys. How? by whose hand?

Clytem.

By mine, to-night, by mine,

Ev'n in that bed which with the abhorred slave
 He hopes to share.

Ægys.

But think—

Clytem.

Have I not thought?

To very madness! I am firm.

Ægys. But if
Again you falter and repent?

Clytem. I do
Repent already my too long delay.

Ægys. And yet—

Clytem. —No more of this. Ev'n though yourself
Were now unwilling, I will have it so.
Shall I let him who only holds my heart
Be dragged to cruel death, and him let live
Who cares not for my love? Here then, I swear it,
To-morrow thou in Argos shalt be King.
Nor hand, nor heart shall tremble! Quick, the blade!

Ægys. I have it here, yet crimson'd with the gore
Of my slain brethren, which to furbish forth
The accursed blood of Atreus now shall stream.

There, take it—thus. And oh! remember that
Thro' fear or pity if you fail to use,

Or using it unless the blow be sure,
Ill done or not at all, here to return,
Were but to find me in Atrides' hall,
Self-slain and weltering in a sea of blood.

Go then! the victim sleeps, be bold and brief!

In, in and do it. *[Exit Clytem.]*

Up! from deepest Hell,

Thyestes, up! display thy horrible shade!
Vengeance is now afoot, thy triumph sure:
A feast, a feast of blood, the blood of foes
In their own palace spread invites thee here.
Now, now the naked steel hangs o'er his heart!
Now, now she waves it, his perfidious Queen!
She strikes, kind Nemesis, the blow, not I,
—So sweetest our revenge as worst her crime—
And she'll strike home: to necessary guilt
Love, anger, fear compel the faithless wife.
The work's adoring!

Aga. (*within.*) Treason!—Ho, my guards—
Treason—Great Heav'n! my wife—I die—Oh! oh!

Ægys. Aye, die the death, and thou, O excellent tool,
—He knew thee ere he died—pour blow on blow;
Hide to its hilt thy blade in his curst heart
Till life's last crimson drop fail of his blood,
Who else, fell tyrant! would have bath'd in ours.

Clytem. (*returns.*) What have I done? where am I?

Ægys. Now at length
Thou'rt worthy to be mine! The tyrant's dead!

Clytem. The dagger drops with blood! hands, garments, face,
Blood all, blood everywhere! O what revenge
Shall yet, for this, be wreak'd! I see, I see
Already at my breast the same red point
Recoil!—and from whose hand?—O Horror! Death!

Ægys. With dreadful tumult the rous'd palace now
Resounds: 'tis time to show them what I am,
And reap the fruit of my long sufferance.

Elec. (*entering.*) Stay!
Foul murd'rer of my sire! Whom next to kill?
Me? Lo! I'm ready—O great Heav'n! my mother!
A dagger in her hand, dabbled in gore!
Speak! say thou didst not do this horrid deed?

Ægys. Be silent, stand aside: I'll soon return.
Tremble, for I am King in Argos now.
Electra soon perhaps, but first Orestes. [*Exit Ægys.*]

Clytem. Orestes! Ah, I know thee now—too late!

Elec. Give me, I pray, the fatal steel.

Clytem. Ægysthus!
Stay, would'st thou kill my son? Nay rather me.

[*Exit Clytem.*]

Elec. The favouring Gods surely inspired my thought
To send Orestes first in safety hence.
Vain is thy furious search. Monster! he lives,
Orestes lives, for whom to manhood grown,
This sword I keep. For I shall see him yet,
THE AVENGER OF HIS SIRE, O'ER ARGOS REIGN.

THE HENRIAD.

[In correcting the immediately following pages for the press, I have had before me the version of the *Henriade* given in Goldsmith's English edition of Voltaire's works, and a separate translation printed in 1797; the latter, by a refugee lady, is of more merit than the other, but great liberties are taken in it with the original, forty to fifty lines being added in some books, sixty to seventy omitted in others. In one or the other work I have occasionally found—which is unavoidable when copying the same model in the same verse—complete lines precisely similar to my own. There would have been no difficulty in changing these, but I have allowed them to stand unchanged.

While, perhaps, the *Henriade* still preserves to the English public much the same position it always occupied, there can be little doubt that the taste of the French nation itself has altered of late years with regard to it, and, indeed, as to poetry in general, and now inclines to the romantic, or Victor Hugo school. Without expressing any other opinion as to this change, I would much regret if it were carried so far as to lead to neglect of Corneille, Racine, Voltaire. Passing by with a mere general acknowledgment the fine passages which abound in and adorn the first five books of the *Henriade*, the beauties of the last five are so great and frequent, embracing, indeed, almost the whole of each book, as certainly must always entitle Voltaire to the highest praise. The combat of Paris in the sixth, the vision of Heaven and Hell, the palace of the Fates, &c., in the seventh, the battle of Troy in the eighth, the temple of Love in the ninth, and the siege and famine of Paris in the last book, are of the first order of epic poetry.]

THE HENRIAD.

BOOK I.

ARGUMENT.

Henry III. reunited with Henry de Bourbon, King of Navarre, against the League, and having already commenced the blockade of Paris, sends him secretly to demand succours from Elizabeth, Queen of England. The hero encounters a tempest. He seeks shelter in an island, where an old man, a Catholic, foretels to him his change of religion and his accession to the throne. Description of England and its government. Interview of Henry with Elizabeth.

THE hero-chief who reign'd o'er France I sing,
By right of conquest and of birth her king ;
Who early rear'd in rude misfortune's school,
Learnt how to conquer, pardon, and to rule ;
Quell'd faction, crush'd the League, confounded Spain,
His subjects' sire and conqueror to reign.

From Heav'n's high vault, eternal Truth ! descend,
And to my page thy light and vigour lend ;
Teach mightiest kings to own thine accents stern ;
'Tis thine to dictate as 'tis theirs to learn,
'Tis thine to tell how Discord's horrid brand
Erst spoil'd the promise of our goodly land,
What dire effects from civil tumults rose,
The prince's errors and the people's woes :
And O if e'er young Poesy's rapt dream
Mix'd her soft voice with thy severer theme,

If her fair hand e'er wreath'd thy stately head,
 Or on thy light her form more favour shed,
 With me then let her tread the sacred way,
 Thy charms to heighten, not to hide their ray.

Valois⁽¹⁾ still reign'd; but thro' his doubtful hand
 The reins of pow'r loose floated o'er the land;
 The state disturb'd, the laws devoid of might,
 Each principle forgot of rank and right:
 No more that prince, whose youthful brows around⁽²⁾
 Enamour'd Fame her brightest garland bound,
 Whose course of conquest Europe eyed with fear,
 For whom his country dropt the honest tear,
 When, fitting tribute to his high renown,
 Admiring Poland gave her ancient crown.
 Obscur'd as sov'reign who as subject shone,
 Fearless in camps but feeble on the throne,
 Beneath a sceptre's weight his weakness bent;
 In guilty luxury each moment spent,
 To youthful debauchees his easy mind
 The springs of wealth, the rod of state resign'd,
 Alike the ambitious ministers of pow'r,
 And the lewd panders of his vacant hour.

Meanwhile the Guises, watchful to embrace
 Each turn of fortune, rose on his disgrace;
 Proud rivals of his pow'r their deep intrigue
 Engender'd first in France the fatal League;
 The lawless mob, blind slaves to greatness still,
 Foes to their prince, obey'd its tyrant will;
 Driv'n by their fury from the Louvre away,
 His venal friends forsake him or betray;
 In rebel Paris foreign banners wave,
 And all seem'd lost when Bourbon came to save,⁽³⁾
 A head of wisdom and a heart of flame,
 To guide and guard his blinded monarch came,
 From shame to victory the way retrac'd,
 And his weak soul from sports to combats brac'd.

'Neath her proud walls the allied Kings appear;
 Rome felt the blow; Spain shook with guilty fear,
 And Europe from afar, her anxious glance
 Bent on the scene, expects the fate of France.

Within fell Discord held her fearful reign,
 Rousing to bloody war the League and Mayne,
 The crowd and church; while from the leaguer'd walls
 The dangerous aid of ready Spain she calls.
 Impetuous, sanguinary, stern and blind,
 The direst ill that ever vex'd mankind;
 On human woes her reign she builds and bounds,
 And worst her willing votary often wounds,
 Despotic rules in ev'ry heart she fires,
 The crimes chastising that herself inspires.

Where, westward of the town, the silver Seine
 Winds her glad course thro' many a flow'ry plain,
 —Scenes, smiling now in quiet beauty, where
 Triumph the Arts and Nature blooms more fair,
 But then the crimson stage of deadliest fight—
 Their martial bands the brother Kings unite,
 In creed divided but in vengeance join'd,
 To Bourbon's sway their conduct was assign'd,
 Proud of his rule, they cast their hate away,
 Know but one church, one only chief obey.

The sainted Louis⁽⁴⁾ from his seat on high,
 Beheld young Henry with paternal eye,
 Presag'd in him the splendour of his race,
 A hero born his ancient throne to grace,
 Admir'd yet mourn'd the brave but erring youth;
 Strove on his heart to shed the light of truth;
 While he, aspiring to his rightful throne,
 Advanc'd by pathways to himself unknown,
 For tho' his aid the friendly saint supplies,
 He wisely veils it from the hero's eyes,

Lest that the dangerous surety of success
Should make his honour as his hazard less.

Already, 'neath her walls, in mutual rage
Paris had seen their hostile bands engage,
And carnage o'er each desolated plain
From sea to sea had spread her sanguine reign.
When Valois thus his great ally addresseth,
The deep sigh labouring from his tortur'd breast:

"You see, my friend, my helpless humbled state;
Yours too the wrong; the League's envenom'd hate
Pursues not me alone: tho' first they strike
The blow on me, it threatens you alike.
Paris disdains us both, in you to see
Her future prince, her lawful king in me:
They know that, when I fall, to you my crown
Is due by birth, by virtue, and renown;
Fearing your future greatness, you they strive
Thus early from my tottering throne to drive;
And haughty Rome has launch'd religion's curse⁽⁵⁾
On that devoted head with fatal force,
Rome, who, tho' soldierless, can hosts command,
Has plac'd her thunders in the Spaniard's hand;
Subjects, friends, kinsmen, all their faith belie,
Against me arm or from me basely fly,
While, by my spoils enrich'd, insatiate Spain
Sends forth her locust tribes to spoil each desert plain.

"Against so many foes who seek our fall,
Let us in turn the stranger's succour call;
In secret gain Britannia to our cause:
I know that mortal hate between us draws
A severing line, that prejudice and pride
Handed from sire to son our states divide,
But with dishonour since they brand my name,
Subjects and country I alike disclaim:
I hate, and would revenge; who aids shall be
Frenchman and friend, in land, in love to me.

Nor will I use the slow and secret way,
 The diplomatic path of dull delay:
 I ask but you; by you my wants display'd
 Shall interest monarchs in a monarch's aid.
 Eliza seek: with her your great renown
 Will plead my cause, will help me to my crown;
 Your arm my foes to vanquish I retain,
 But from your virtues I my friends would gain."

He ceas'd; the hero, loth to quit the scene,
 Jealous of glory, heard with thoughtful mien:
 A generous grief the monarch's words impart,
 Calling that time so dear again to heart,
 When, strong in virtue, without aid, intrigue,
 Himself and⁽⁶⁾ Condé shook the general League.
 But short the struggle: soon his loyal mind
 Yields to the duty which his chief assign'd;
 At once the anger of his arm he rein'd,
 And left the laurels that his courage gain'd.
 The astonish'd troops in ignorance await,
 And on his quick return attend their fate;
 Meanwhile the guilty town, in pale alarm,
 Still thinks him present, ready for the storm;
 Best guardian of the crown, his name alone
 Restrains the foe, and props the menac'd throne.

When Neustria's plains the prince at length had past,
 Mornay⁽⁷⁾ of all his train remain'd the last;
 Unskill'd to flatter but in friendship tried,
 The virtuous champion of an erring side;
 Mornay, for prudence fam'd and honest zeal,
 Who sought alike of church and state the weal,
 Honour'd at court tho' courtiers he reprov'd,
 Dread enemy of Rome, by Rome belov'd.

Thro' two tall rocks, upon whose jagged sides
 Breaks the vain anger of the foaming tides,

Dieppe's glad harbour met the hero's view ;
 In busy groups attend the eager crew ;
 The ready vessel, sovereign of the main,
 Stay'd but his will to cleave the watery plain ;
 The impetuous north, enchain'd in airy cave,
 To softer gales had left the tranquil wave ;
 The anchor weigh'd, they part ; a favouring wind
 Fills their white sails ; and France fades fast behind.

But soon dark clouds obscure the azure skies ;
 Hisses the air, the stormy winds arise ;
 Thro' the black night the baleful lightnings flash,
 The rough sea moans, the angry thunders clash ;
 The fires above, the boiling waves below,
 A death of horror to the pale crew show.
 His eye to France the patriot hero throws,
 Sees in his danger but his country's woes ;
 No selfish fear his bosom owns, yet seems
 To mourn the hazard of protracted schemes.
 Thus, but less generous, on Epirus' strand,
 Cæsar,⁽⁸⁾ when struggling for the world's command,
 Gave to the blustering of the stormy north
 The destiny of Rome, the fate of earth,
 Pompey and Neptune equally defied,
 And dar'd his fortune to the wintry tide.

But now the King of Heav'n, the earth's great God,
 Who walks upon the winds, at whose dread nod
 Rous'd are the tempests and the thunders hurl'd,
 Who builds, destroys the empires of the world,
 In mercy deign'd, from his bright throne on high,
 On France's hope to bend a pitying eye ;
 Himself as guide, the obsequious billows bore
 The favour'd hero to the nearest shore,
 Where Jersey, rising from the ocean wave,
 To his tost bark her welcome shelter gave.

Hard by the shore a cool and shady wood
 Meet refuge for the storm-tost sailor stood ;
 A lofty rock its guard that seaward throws
 Forbade the north to trouble its repose ;
 A grot was near, whose structure simply plann'd
 Ow'd all its ornaments to Nature's hand,
 In whose obscure retreat, from courts remote,
 The sweets of peace a reverend hermit sought ;
 By man forgotten, free from worldly care,
 Himself to know was all his study there ;
 'Twas there he mourn'd the crimes of early days,
 When pleasure lur'd him to her sinful ways ;
 By crystal fount reclin'd or flowery plain,
 He learnt that brightest victory to gain
 To conquer human passions, there, resign'd
 To Heav'n's high will, he hop'd a grave to find.
 The God he worshipp'd, gracious to his age,
 Of heav'nly wisdom op'd the unerring page,
 Profuse to him his gifts divine bestow'd,
 And to his view the doubtful future show'd.

Thus taught to know his guest, the sage his board
 With bread and fruit, a frugal banquet, stor'd ;
 To Henry this was no unwonted meal,
 To labour's lowly cot who lov'd to steal,
 Where, far from courts, himself to know he tried,
 And laid awhile the sword of pow'r aside.

The broils that o'er the Christian empire spread
 For useful converse gave a fitting head.
 Mornay, to Calvin's doctrines firmly bent,
 His strong support to that religion lent :
 Henry, still doubtful what to seek or fly,
 Humbly besought instruction from on high.
 "In ev'ry age, he said, weak mortals shroud
 Truth's holy light with error's hazy cloud ;
 Expecting my support from God alone,
 Why is the path which leads to him unknown ?

Surely from man, the creature of his hand,
A God so gracious homage can command!"

The sage replied—"Revere Heav'n's perfect plan,
Nor blame the Maker for the faults of man;
Years have gone by since first my doubting eyes
Beheld this sect, unaided, weak, arise;
Cautious, from exile, did its steps advance
By paths obscure thro' slow-believing France,
Till, soaring from the dust, I view'd at length
The horrid phantom with resistless strength
March to the throne his triumph to complete,
And spurn our altars with unholy feet.

"Alone, in this poor cell, from courts remov'd,
I've mourn'd the insults of the creed I lov'd;
One hope has cheer'd each suffering moment past,
So new a worship cannot always last;
It owes its origin to man's caprice,
And, sudden as it rose, must shortly cease.
The works of man, like man, are feeble still;
Each factious purpose God confounds at will;
He, He alone is firm, and while we view
Unnumber'd sects relentless war pursue,
Truth shall retire to the Eternal's feet:
Rarely in haughty breasts her light we meet;
But he who seeks the glorious prize shall find,
A ray from God to cheer the willing mind.
Thou art his choice, his hand shall lead thee on
Thro' doubt and danger to thy country's throne.
E'en now commands he Victory's bright ray
In dreadful accents to prepare thy way.
But if thy stubborn heart the truth disdain,
Then shall thy best hope of success be vain.
If Beauty lure thee, dread the lurking snare,
Flee the sweet draught, dishonour, death are there:

Fear most thy passions, they are most thy foes,
 Pleasure resist and vicious ease oppose;
 Till, by one effort than the past more bold,
 The Leaguers conquer'd and thyself controll'd,
 In a long bloody siege whose horrid tale
 Shall make to latest times our children pale,
 Thy just wrath soften'd by thy subjects' grief,
 To the pent foe thy mercy brings relief,
 Then shall thy heart, the empire's misery o'er,
 With grateful love thy fathers' God adore,
 Shall win the joys that piety reward,
 His light to guide thee and his arm to guard."

The old man ceas'd—his ev'ry word a dart
 Of heavenly fire pierc'd Henry's inmost heart,
 Who deem'd those happy times restor'd agen,
 When Gods held converse with their subject men,
 When simple Virtue miracles display'd,
 And utter'd oracles which kings obey'd.

As Henry bade the reverend seer farewell,
 His gushing eyes an honest sorrow tell;
 And from that hour he saw a guiding ray,
 The brilliant promise of a future day;
 But all untouch'd was Mornay—from his view,
 God, master of his gifts, the light withdrew;
 Vainly by him the name of wise possess,
 Error his lot, tho' many virtues blest.

But while the sage, instructed by the Lord,
 To the still listening prince explain'd his word,
 The rude winds ceas'd, appear'd the radiant sun,
 And the blue waters murmuring gently on.
 Soon he conducts great Bourbon to the shore,
 Who, weighing thence, his course for England bore.

And when those white cliffs met his anxious eyes,
 Her happy change he noted with surprise;

Where long abuse of wise and clement laws,
 Of direst ills had been the fatal cause,
 On that red stage, where fought and fell the brave,
 That slippery throne, short pathway to the grave,
 A virgin Queen the destinies enchain'd,
 And wisely firm with brightest lustre reign'd,
 Elizabeth, whose prudence fix'd at will
 The doubtful scale of warring Europe still.
 The tameless Britons whose impulsive minds
 Nor freedom's ease contents, nor pow'r despotic binds,
 Forget their losses 'neath her happy reign;
 Their fruitful herds cover each verdant plain;
 Plenty at home, their tall ships met the breeze,
 Lords of the earth, and rulers of the seas;
 Their fleets, imperious o'er the subject deep,
 Homeward the wealth of farthest regions sweep,
 Their capital, the centre of the world,
 Where reign'd the Arts, and War his banner furl'd.

Within her walls are still united found
 Three powers, astonish'd at the ties which bound,
 King, nobles, commons, in one body join'd,
 By interest separate, by law combin'd,
 Three sacred branches one great whole compose,
 Dangerous itself and dreadful to its foes.
 Happy the people, who, their duty known,
 The sovereign pow'r with fitting honour own!
 Happy the king, who, o'er a people free,
 In justice reigns respecting liberty!
 "When, cried the prince, transported at the sight,
 Glory and peace shall France like her unite?
 Hear, hear ye Kings, who rule o'er lands afar,
 A woman's hand has clos'd the gates of war,
 To you she leaves the battle's bloody train,
 Blest with her people's love in peace to reign."

At length he gains the great and wealthy town,
 Where freedom reigns, which peace and plenty crown.

Now he beholds the Norman victor's tow'r,
 And reaches now Eliza's regal bow'r.
 By Mornay follow'd still, he seeks the Queen,
 No pomp in them nor idle splendour seen,
 Gauds which too oft attract, but which the wise
 And truly great, in conscious worth, despise.
 Candour and native grace his speech enhance,
 While in her ear he urg'd the wants of France,
 His great heart humbling for his country's weal
 To prayers that more its nobleness reveal.

"This, then, exclaims the astonished Queen, the cause
 That valiant Bourbon to our poor realm draws!
 Is Henry now his foe's protector made?
 Comes he for Valois here to ask my aid?
 Whence is it, while your long and mutual hate
 Still spreads unquestion'd o'er each wondering state,
 That foes so mortal link'd as friends appear,
 That Valois guides the arm he wont to fear?"

Replied the prince, "Our enmity is past,
 He was a slave but breaks his chain at last;
 Happier had he, each weak doubt cast aside,
 On me and on his sword alone relied;
 Too fond of artifice and flattery low,
 Thro' fear and weakness he became my foe;
 His danger seen, his faults are at an end;
 Whom once I conquer'd I shall now defend.
 'Tis thine, great Queen, thy country's honour'd name
 To raise, in this just war, to nobler fame,
 To crown thy many virtues, join with me
 An injur'd monarch to revenge and free."

Th' impatient Queen commands him to disclose,
 True and entire the tale of Gallia's woes,
 What springs, what chain of actions wrought a change
 Of feeling in the land so great and strange.

"Tho' busy Fame has oft to me, she said,
 Her rumours of these sad reverses spread,
 Yet in her tidings, light and indiscreet,
 Fiction with fact so join'd, with truth deceit,
 The vague tale never won my cautious mind:
 From you alone I hope the truth to find,
 You, of Valois the victor and the guide,
 Explain the ties which bind you to his side;
 Each turn of fortune condescend to tell,
 None know so fully, or can show so well,
 Paint each disaster, trace each glorious deed,
 'Twill form a lesson e'en for kings to read."

"Must I, alas! rejoin'd the prince, recal
 The mournful history of our recent fall.
 Would angry Heav'n, the witness of my woe,
 Eternal lethe o'er those horrors throw!
 Wherefore command my faltering tongue to name
 My country's madness and my kinsmen's shame?
 —Recoils from the dread past my shuddering heart!
 But, at your wish, I will the whole impart.
 Some with more eloquence would mould the tale,
 Excuse their weaknesses, their errors veil,
 Such courtier stratagems are not for me,
 A soldier, not an envoy, speaks to thee."

BOOK II.

ARGUMENT.

Henry the Great relates to Queen Elizabeth the history of the civil wars of France: he traces them from their origin, and enters into particulars of the massacre of St. Bartholomew.

THE sacred source from which the ruin flows
 Augments, Great Queen, the pressure of our woes;
 Religion's merciless mistaken zeal
 Arms ev'ry heart with rage, each hand with steel.
 It is not mine the quarrel to decide,
 Which be the holier name or better guide,
 While thus deceit on either side I see,
 Rome and Geneva are alike to me:
 If of the right their actions be the test,
 By fraud and crime if falsehood be confest,
 Which shall I choose, when, mutually wrong,
 Error and cruelty to both belong:
 My sword drawn only to defend the throne,
 I leave God's vengeance to his hand alone;
 In doubt myself, to others I define
 No bounds of faith, profane no holy shrine.
 Perish for ever the detested art
 Which claims a despot empire o'er the heart!
 Curs'd be the creed, which, to convert, restrains,
 Whose bloody altars persecution stains,
 Which, with false zeal and selfish interest bliv'd,
 To serve a God of peace destroys mankind! /

O would to Heav'n, whose will I seek to know,
 Our erring court had thought and acted so!
 But no wise scruple check'd the Guises' hand,
 Ambitious rulers of a credulous land;
 Their interest veiling 'neath religion's shroud
 'Gainst me they arm'd the fury of the crowd;
 Caught in the snare, urg'd on by bigot rage,
 In cruel combat the blind fools engage,
 Madly their lives endangering to sustain
 Some idle point, some doctrine dark and vain.
 You know the people, know too what they dare,
 When, in Heav'n's cause, the vengeful sword they bare;
 Paint but religion outrag'd, and they rise,
 Break their weak oaths, their king, their laws despise;
 You saw the rising evil, and your skill
 Crush'd in its bud the progress of the ill;
 Scarce in your kingdom was the storm reveal'd;
 Your cares foresaw it and your virtues still'd;
 England is happy, free, just laws in force,
 —But Medicis pursued a diff'rent course.

Mov'd by this mournful sketch of Gallia's woe
 If more of Medicis you seek to know,
 With guileless tongue I will the truth unfold,
 Which few have rightly heard, tho' many told;
 Few have the depths of that dark heart e'er trac'd;
 But I, whose childhood in her court was past,
 Have mark'd beneath her tread each tempest swell,
 Have learnt to know her and to know too well.

Her husband,² dying in the flow'r of age,
 To her ambition left an open stage.
 Her sons, to empire by her counsel train'd,
 Alike she hated when alone they reign'd.³
 Her busy hands, around the harass'd throne,
 Confusion, jealousy, and feuds have sown;
 Opposing ever with successful skill
 France against France, the Guise to Condé still;⁴

Ready should passion urge or gain invite,
 Friends to abandon and with foes unite;
 From pleasure⁵ only by ambition sway'd,
 A bigot to the creed which she betray'd;
 But one more trait, without their virtues crown'd,
 In her the errors of her sex abound:
 That word escap'd me—pardon my free tongue,
 Scarce does Eliza to her kind belong;
 With ev'ry winning charm that makes them dear,
 In thee far nobler qualities appear,
 In thee to monarchs Heav'n a model gave,
 And Europe ranks thee with her great and brave!

Already, 'neath th' untimely stroke of death,
 The second Francis⁶ had resign'd his breath;
 A weakly youth, whose nature yet unknown
 By blind love to the Guise was mark'd alone.
 Charles, younger still, enjoy'd the regal name,
 But from the Queen each dreaded mandate came.
 Her pow'r to keep, upon her docile child
 Eternal infancy to fix, she toil'd.
 The torch of discord fearlessly inflam'd,
 And his new reign by streams of blood proclaim'd;
 Of rival sects she arm'd the bigot rage.
 Dreux, of their first exploits the deadly stage,
 Saw on her field their fatal banners wave.
 Last scene of his long life, a bloody grave,
 Where sleep our kings, old Montmorency⁷ found,
 Struck by a hostile bullet to the ground.
 At Orleans next, the Guise⁸ was doom'd to feel,
 Worthy a better death, fierce Poltrot's steel.
 My helpless father,⁹ willing slave, at court,
 The Queen's unconscious tool and fortune's sport,
 From his own hand preparing his own woe,
 Fell, fighting blindly for his bitterest foe.
 Condé,¹⁰ who saw his only child in me,
 My tutor, friend and father deign'd to be;

'Mid war and warriors I my cradle made,
 Nurst in fatigue beneath the laurel's shade,
 With him disdain'd the life which courtiers led,
 Battles the games in which *my* youth was bred!

He too, from life and me too quickly ta'en,
 Perish'd, alas! on Jarnac's fatal plain.
 Ungen'rous Montesquieu! thy ruthless stroke
 Less the bold foe than foul assassin spoke:
 I saw him fall, beheld the hero bleed,
 Too weak to hinder or avenge the deed.

Heav'n to my helpless boyhood ever kind,
 To heroes still my early years consign'd.
 Coligny,¹¹ worthy to succeed him well,
 To guide and guard me came when Condé fell:
 To him I owe my all—if Europe see
 Some little virtue, worth her praise, in me,
 If Rome to my exploits has honour paid,
 To you I owe it all, illustrious shade!
 Beneath his eyes my youthful courage grew,
 And from his deeds my life its lessons drew;
 Alone and old, 'gainst Medicis and fate,
 I saw him of our cause sustain the weight;
 By foes respected as to friends endear'd,
 At times unfortunate but ever fear'd;
 Skilful alike in combat or retreat,
 More glorious, great, and dreaded in defeat,
 Than in bright History's approving line
 Gaston,¹² or brave Dunois, in their long conquests shine.

When ten whole years had past, and unsubdued
 The baffled Queen our constant influence view'd,
 Weary of battles which no honour brought,
 Of victories rare, imperfect, dearly bought,
 She sought these useless efforts to forego,
 And end the contest by a single blow.

She call'd us to her court, bade discord cease,
 She could not conquer but she gave us peace;
 —And what a peace! false name for deed so curst,
 Whose fatal olive in our blood was nurst!
 Wilt thou, just God! see kings thus smooth the way
 To crime, nor rise thy vengeance to display?

True to his King and country in his heart,
 E'en when compell'd to take a hostile part,
 Coligny earliest hail'd the dawning light,
 Which seem'd all sects in friendship to unite,
 And as distrust a hero seldom knows,
 Unarm'd he led me thro' a host of foes.
 The Queen, a mother's fondness in her face,
 Hiding her heart's deep hate, with close embrace
 And tears fast flowing, clasp'd me to her breast;
 Her friendship on Coligny warmly prest,
 To guide her course his counsel feign'd to claim,
 With dignities and honours grac'd his name,
 To all our friends, too soon by false hopes won,
 Promis'd the future favours of her son,
 And long we hop'd these peaceful joys to share;
 Tho' in her smiles some fear'd, foresaw a snare;
 In each new grace new danger they believ'd,
 But Charles, the more they doubt, the more deceiv'd.
 To fraud and perjury in secret train'd,¹⁸
 Already his consent the Queen had gain'd,
 Had stamp'd upon his young and easy heart
 Her cruel counsels and perfidious art;
 By nature fierce, he stor'd each guilty rule,
 Apt scholar in her execrable school!

Their horrid mystery better still to hide,
 Charles gave his princely sister as my bride.
 O fatal bond! false name! oaths sworn in vain!
 Hymen! first signal of our future pain,
 Thy baleful touch awoke the ire of God,
 And to my sight a dying mother show'd.

I will not be unjust,¹⁴ nor yet suppose
 That to the Queen her sudden fate she owes;
 The charge, tho' true, I will at once dismiss,
 Enough her crimes without my adding this.
 My mother died—forgive the tear that falls
 When sadd'ning Memory her end recalls.

Their plot complete, approach'd the chosen hour,
 Big with the vengeance of offended pow'r.
 Beneath the favour of the night's dark shade
 Silent and sure the circling sign was made.
 Conscious of coming crimes, that fatal night¹⁵
 The partial moon shut up her trembling light.
 His downy couch at eve without a thought
 Of ill at hand had good Coligny sought;
 When sudden on his peaceful slumbers break
 Wild warning cries which bid the hero wake.
 Starting he sees the flash of torches, arms,
 His palace fir'd, the people in alarms,
 His bleeding servants stifled in the flame,
 And ruffian hordes that to the slaughter came.
 With savage merriment and clamour loud,
 From ev'ry street the ensanguin'd rabble crowd,
 "Let none be spar'd—our King their death demands,
 And God and Medicis direct our hands."
 As swept the hot blast the thick smoke beside,
 Afar the young Teligny he descried,
 His party's hope, an honour to the land,
 Whose love had merited his daughter's hand¹⁶
 Dragg'd, bound and bleeding, by the murd'rous train,
 With outstretch'd arms, imploring help in vain.

Unarm'd, defenceless, of all aid bereft,
 No hope of freedom nor of vengeance left,
 To cheer his heart this only solace came,
 To die with glory as he liv'd with fame.
 Already the fierce band, with thundering din,
 An entrance to their victim sought to win;

Himself unbarr'd the gate with brow serene,
 With that unruffled dignity of mien,
 Such as in battle, where, sedately bold,
 He led to carnage or the war controll'd.

At that august and venerable look,
 A sudden awe their guilty spirits shook;
 Some unknown pow'r their deadly fury tam'd.
 "Complete your work, my comrades, he exclaimed,
 Stain with my stiffen'd blood this silver hair
 Which war, less stern, has deign'd so long to spare;
 Strike and fear nothing, I forgive the blow,
 My life is nought, is yours, was ever so,
 Happier had I resign'd it in your cause"
 —Touch'd at his noble words the ruffians pause,
 Some drop their weapons, struck with sudden fears,
 Some clasp his feet and bathe them with their tears,
 While he, majestic 'mid the contrite horde,
 Some Eastern monarch seem'd by suppliant slaves ador'd.

But now, indignant at their weak delay,
 Fierce Besme approach'd impatient for his prey.
 When low and trembling thus he saw them kneel,
 A savage fury his red eyes reveal;
 With heart which ne'er had mercy's influence prov'd,
 He at the tender sight alone unmov'd,
 Deeming it crime and treason to the Queen,
 If in his deeds the least remorse were seen,
 Thro' the prone crowd, where still, with dauntless face,
 Coligny stood, dashing with furious pace,
 The ruthless fiend, deep in the hero's breast,
 His thirsty blade, with look averted, prest,
 Lest at a glance of that mild eye unnerv'd
 From the sure mark his murderous arm had swerv'd.

Such the sad fate of Gallia's greatest son,
 Insulted,¹⁷ outrag'd, when the deed was done;

His mangled body long unburied lay,
 Of birds obscene and gnawing dogs the prey.
 His gory head, of her and of the King
 A conquest worthy, to the Queen they bring.
 She, mistress of herself, with careless eye,
 Scarce seem'd the fruit of vengeance to enjoy.
 With nor remorse nor pleasure in her look,
 Coolly the horrid gift, as if familiar, took.

Who can the terrors of that awful night,
 Its carnage, crimes, and cruelty recite?
 Coligny's murder, tho' the first decreed,
 But feebly images each bloodier deed.
 Kindled to rage by duty and by zeal,
 The frantic hordes well plied each reeking steel;
 Drunk with new pow'r, their fierce eyes flashing flame,
 O'er breathless heaps of our slain comrades came.
 Guise,¹⁸ at their head, implacable of ire,
 On us reveng'd the murder of his sire;
 Their savage hate Nevers¹⁹ and Gondi fir'd;
 Tavanne,²⁰ his poniard bare, their wrath inspir'd,
 To a long list of deaths proclaim'd the way,
 Led them to murder and mark'd out the prey.

I will not paint the cries, the tumult wild,
 The crimson torrents which our streets defil'd;
 The son lay dying on his headless sire—
 Mother and daughter, old and young expire—
 On his sack'd hearth the butcher'd husband lies—
 Dash'd on the stones the cradled infant dies—
 Ever on human rage attend such crimes;
 But worse remains—what nor from coming times
 Nor scarcely from our own will credit gain—
 Whene'er the slaughter flagg'd, the frenzied train,
 By cruel priests to fresh excesses cheer'd,
 At each new massacre, unblushing, rear'd,
 Red with our innocent blood, the deadly sword,
 And, kneeling, to the death invok'd their outrag'd Lord!

How many heroes, undeserving, bled!
 Renel,²¹ Pardaillan join'd the num'rous dead!
 Guerchy²² the brave, and Lavardin the great,
 Worthy a longer life and better fate!
 Among the victims whom that horrid night
 Fate hurl'd for ever from the world's sweet light.
 Marsillac and Soubise,²³ condemn'd to death,
 Awhile defended their devoted breath,
 Feeble and bleeding from repeated blows,
 To the barr'd Louvre urg'd back by ruthless foes,
 Stain'd with their guiltless blood that palace floor,
 Whose King betray'd them while they aid implore.

The spirit of the storm, from high the Queen
 Feasts her calm glance at leisure on the scene;
 Her cruel favourites with curious eye
 Half pleasure and half fear stood gazing by.
 Excellent heroes! to eternal fame
 On what false grounds our weak sires fix'd their claim!
 Our wiser license shames their niggard times,
 The road to honour lies with us thro' crimes.

Charles too²⁴—O sin unheard! O worst disgrace!
 Forgetful of his name and kingly place,
 Fiercely the trembling Protestants pursued,
 And in their blood his sacred hand imbrued.
 Nay more, e'en Valois,²⁵ whom I now obey,
 For whom, a suppliant here, your aid I pray,
 Bore in his barbarous brother's crimes a part,
 And to the shameful carnage steel'd his heart.
 Not that such deeds by nature he enjoy'd;
 His hand in blood has been but rarely dyed;
 Too young the curst example to oppose,
 His very cruelty from weakness rose.

Some few indeed amid a mass of slain,
 Escap'd the fury of the murd'rous train.

Canmont!⁸⁶ the history of thy happier fate
 With wonder long shall future times relate.
 Borne down with years, between his two fair boys
 Their aged father calm repose enjoys;
 One bed enclos'd the children and the sire;
 The hot assassins, blind with bigot ire,
 Their daggers on the group plung'd fierce and fast;
 Death o'er the hapless couch at random past;
 God, in whose hands repose our fortunes still,
 Can wing or ward its final stroke at will;
 That very rage their murderous aim deceiv'd,
 No blow, nor hurt the younger child receiv'd;
 O'er him, unseen, Heav'n spread its friendly shield,
 And from their hate his helpless youth conceal'd.
 His father stricken with a thousand blows,
 In falling hid the infant from his foes,
 And thus, the people and the King beguil'd,
 A second life the parent gave his child.

But where was I in that disastrous hour?
 Trusting alas! of sacred oaths the pow'r,
 Deep in the palace, from the din remote,
 Sweet sleep the while my wearied senses sought.
 O fatal slumber! horrid, horrid night!
 When death saluted my awakening sight.
 Round me my dearest servants in their gore,
 Lay weltering, trampled on the marble floor;
 The savage murderers closing round my bed
 Already rais'd their daggers o'er my head,
 Such then must be at last my wretched fate
 Methought! and bow'd my head the stroke to wait;
 But, whether for my royal blood respect,
 Speaking in my behalf, the ruffians check'd,
 Whether the Queen's ingenious hate for me,
 Thought death too mild a punishment to be,
 Or that, by fear of future storms restrain'd,
 Her prudent rage in me a hostage gain'd,

My life she spar'd,²⁷ perchance for trials new,
And galling fetters round my free limbs threw.

Fortune to brave Coligny prov'd more kind ;
He but some weary days of life resign'd,
His freedom, glory follow'd to the tomb—
You shudder at my sad tale's tragic gloom ;
Forgive me, Madam ! tho' your gentle breast
Such horrors shock, I have e'en worse suppress.
From the high Louvre's ensanguin'd walls, 'tis said
To ready France the Queen her signal made ;
When Kings wish crime how quickly slaves obey !
What emulous crowds their loyal zeal display !
All copied Paris:²⁸ sudden o'er the land
Death wav'd his greedy and resistless hand,
Till the swoln rivers, crimson'd with their gore,
Our dead in heaps to frighted Ocean bore.

BOOK III.

ARGUMENT.

The hero continues the history of the Civil Wars of France. Wretched death of Charles IX. Reign of Henry III. His character; that of the famous Duke de Guise, known by the name of *Balafré*. Battle of Contras. Murder of the Duke de Guise. Extremities to which Henry III. is reduced. Mayne becomes Chief of the League, and d'Anmale its hero. Reconciliation of Henry III. and Henry, King of Navarre. Succours are promised by Queen Elizabeth. Her answer to Henry de Bourbon.

AWHILE high Heav'n's inscrutable decree
 Its course to crime left thus uncheck'd and free,
 When, that the victims to their blades were few,
 Or that of carnage tir'd the assassins grew,
 The people from their guilty frenzy paus'd,
 Awoke, and saw the ruin they had caus'd;
 Their blind rage fled, mercy resum'd her throne,
 Contrite they heard their injured country's moan.
 Acts too of grace the monarch's horror spoke
 For his late crimes which keen remorse now woke:
 The guilty school in which his youth was train'd
 Too much had spoil'd his nature, had restrain'd,
 Not silenc'd the small voice whose promptings make
 Kings on their thrones with conscious terror shake.
 Nurst by his mother, in her maxims bred,
 Yet not like her with heart to pity dead,
 Grief came the blossom of his days to fade,
 A deadly languor all his pow'rs decay'd;
 Upon his head Almighty anger hurl'd
 The bolt of vengeance, showing to the world,

By his untimely miserable end,
 Their dreadful fate who should like him offend.
 I saw him dying¹—still, with fearful pow'r,
 On aching Memory presses that dark hour!
 From loathsome sores—just penance for the blood
 Shed by his orders—stream'd the vital flood;
 Thus smitten by Heav'n's vengeful viewless hand,
 His horrid end appall'd the pitying land,
 Who mourn'd their King so soon and sadly dead,
 Their King to crime by bad example led,
 From whose maturer years they fondly drew
 A hope that greater lenience might ensue.

When known his fate, with lust of empire flush'd,
 Impatient² Valois from the far north rush'd
 To seize, amid those plains still wet with gore,
 The crown which late his hapless brother bore.

Not long had Poland's universal voice
 On Valois as her monarch fix'd its choice;
 Stronger than wealth or pow'r his name alone
 Pleaded his cause and plac'd him on the throne.
 Fame won too early is a dangerous weight!
 For Valois' strength the trial prov'd too great:
 Not mine the mission here his faults to shield—
 To him my peace, my life to him I yield:
 But e'en to him my honour ne'er shall bend,
 I mourn, I blame him and his rights defend.

His glory like a shade has pass'd away;
 Great is the change but common as the day;
 By some sad contrast, tho' in combat brave,
 Too oft the monarch grows in courts a slave.
 Courage is from within; in Valois' mind
 With many virtues much of vice combin'd;
 Great in the field but feeble on the throne,
 His only firmness as a soldier shone.

His shameless favourites with insidious skill,
 Flattering his sloth, his weakness rul'd at will.
 Deep in the palace, their voluptuous band,
 Blind to the misery of a groaning land,
 Their guilty wishes from his mandates gain'd,
 And recklessly the country's treasures drain'd;
 Weeping the luxury their sufferings paid,
 The wretched people with vain sighs obey'd.

While yet the King, beneath the galling weight
 Of cruel taxes, thus oppress the state,
 The Guise^s appear'd, and soon the fickle crowd
 Before that dazzling star in homage bow'd;
 His own, his sire's renown, his generous heart,
 His valour, beauty, grace, the happy art
 Of pleasing, that e'en more than virtue charm'd,
 Gain'd ev'ry voice and ev'ry foe disarm'd.

None soft persuasion's talent better knew
 To guide their passions or his own subdue;
 None could with happier skill vast plans conceal,
 None shroud dark projects in a fairer veil:
 Pliant and popular, imperious, proud,
 The nation's sufferings he proclaim'd aloud;
 Of imposts harsh he mourn'd the heavy yoke,
 While to the land *his* presence Plenty spoke.
 His gifts the pray'r of timid want prevent,
 The poor that came in grief returned content.
 Terrible and unswerving in his rage;
 Rash in his schemes but in their conduct sage;
 Hating the great whom yet he deign'd to woo;
 Grand in his virtues and his vices too;
 Prosperous in battle, tried in danger's day,
 Born to command, to rule, but not obey!

Doubting his strength, at first his arts he plied
 To fix the inconstant rabble to his side;

These gull'd and gain'd, bold from success, he rose
 With less disguise his sovereign to oppose:
 Then first the League in Paris rear'd its head,
 And soon o'er France the curst infection spread;
 Dire pest! alike by peers and people train'd,
 Fertile in tyrants and with carnage stain'd.

Thus strangely France two Kings at once confest!
 Valois the title and the pomp possest,
 But Guise spread hope or terror where he came,
 And, the pow'r his, scarce needed the vain name.

Rous'd by the murmurs which around him broke,
 At length from his weak trance the King awoke,
 Strove for awhile to clear his heavy sight
 —In vain, for, dazzled by the sudden light,
 He saw not, 'mid the furious storm that pour'd,
 Where, o'er his head, the threatening thunders roar'd,
 Then sought as if he deem'd the alarum vain,
 Too long the labour, his old ease again,
 Warn'd of his danger but again to sink,
 Tranquil he slept on ruin's tottering brink.

I still remain'd, of other aid bereft,
 The only friend that Fate his weakness left:
 Heir, at his death, to Gallia's ancient throne,
 Defending him I but preserv'd my own;
 To his defects a needful help I gave,
 And rush'd to perish with him, or to save.

But Guise too wise and wary to annoy,
 E'en from his foes found weapons to destroy;
 Of steady virtue he assum'd the guise,
 Stood forth their champion to the people's eyes;
 Beneath religion's mask his aim conceal'd,
 And forc'd the King his only hope to yield.
 In gloomy contrast with their happy code
 Of stranger sects the threatening evils show'd,

A foe, alike to God and Rome, in me,
 The friend of heresy he feign'd to see,
 Against me arm'd the public hate and fear,
 That, humbly, I pursued *thy* great career,
 And mark'd me one whose restless spirit plann'd
 Alike the ruin of the church and land.

Fir'd by his words and for the church distressed
 A factious mob around the palace prest.
 Rome, by the League's dissembled terrors sway'd,
 The King my friendship to embrace forbade;
 Too weak, he gave unmurmuring consent,
 And when his injuries to avenge I went,
 I found with his worst foes my brother join'd,
 And, for my ruin, with the League combin'd,
 His troops, despite himself, spread far and near,
 And war promulgated from very fear.

I wept his weakness, but without delay
 To combat not revenge him led the way:
 Instant its hundred towns the League alarm'd
 Thro' universal France against me arm'd.
 Impetuous servant of an easy lord,
 Joyeuse the torrent of his ardour pour'd,
 But Guise, whose courage was combin'd with skill,
 Block'd up my succours or dispers'd at will;
 By foes and fate assail'd on ev'ry side,
 I dar'd the hazard and their hate defied.

'Twas mine on Coutras' field Joyeuse⁴ to meet;
 You know his wretched end, his quick defeat;
 'Twere idle, vain our chance success to tell,
 The fate of war—nobly he fought and fell
 —Not thus, exclaim'd the Queen, the glorious tale,
 Which from my ken your modesty would veil,
 Unnotic'd shall be left; proceed, relate
 Your valour, triumph, and your rival's fate;

A hero only such exploits should show,
 Nor I unworthy all your fame to know.
 She ceas'd: at such high praise ingenuous shame
 Spread over Henry's brow its noble flame;
 Perforce his glory to declare subdued,
 He thus the fatal history pursued.

Of all the favourites who on Valois prey'd,
 Flatter'd his weakness and his conduct sway'd,
 Joyeuse, of lineage in France esteem'd,
 The least unworthy of the honour seem'd,
 His heart was virtuous, his intentions right,
 And, had Fate spar'd him in his maiden fight,
 Doubtless to nobler deeds his spirit fir'd,
 Had now the bright renown of Guise acquir'd,
 But nurst at court, from youth in luxury bred,
 The subtle poison to his heart had spread,
 And left but headlong courage to oppose,
 A dangerous gift as oft the issue shows!

The charms of love for frowns of war resign'd,
 Round him in crowds his courtier friends combin'd,
 On their gay habits amorous cyphers trac'd,
 Which the kind hand of smiling beauty plac'd;
 Diamonds their fire from helm and hauberk flung,
 And from their nerveless arms rich baubles hung.
 Ardent, tumultuous, arrogant, untaught,
 Their splendid folly to the fight they brought;
 Proud of their pomp, and in their numbers strong,
 With sanguine speed rush'd orderless along.

When first their eyes my scanty strength survey'd,
 Far other scene the silent camp display'd,
 No carpet knights but veterans fierce and bold,
 Harden'd by travail and in combat old,
 Whose only pride was in the wounds they bore,
 Whose weapons the sole trappings which they wore.

Free from all pomp, like them array'd and arm'd,
 My rusty squadrons for the fight I form'd:
 Where thickest throng'd the war their charge I led,
 My only glory battling at their head.
 Soon we beheld our foes o'erthrown and flying,
 The field all cover'd with their dead and dying,
 With grief compell'd in kindred breasts to hide
 The blades which Spanish blood had better dyed.

Here let me own that of our foes whom Time
 Swept down relentless in their manhood's prime,
 All with brave hearts sustain'd the battle's roar,
 And in their fronts the wounds of honour bore,
 Firm in their posts saw certain death advance
 Without one backward step, or quailing glance.
 Such is the character our courtiers bear,
 Pleasures degrade not, nor delights impair,
 From peace to danger gladly they depart,
 Heroes in war, vile sycophants at court.

For me, too active in that bloody strife,
 Vain my commands to spare Joyeuse's life;
 Soon from the mangled heaps I saw him torn,
 Pale, cold, and breathless, by my soldiers borne;
 Like some young flow'r its tender head which rears,
 By zephyrs woo'd, and gemm'd by morning's tears,
 A moment bright, but soon to sink decay'd
 By blighting winds, or 'neath the mower's blade.

But why that mournful victory declare?
 Why will not Memory from her volume tear
 The cruel triumph of that fatal day,
 Whose blood my tears in vain would wash away?
 Glory thus bought no more to me is dear,
 And Europe's praise sounds curses in mine ear.

The luckless issue of that single fight
 Serv'd more the fortunes of the King to blight,

For when the tale of his disgrace was known,
 The League and Paris took a bolder tone;
 While the fresh honour which the Guise had gain'd,
 Heighten'd his danger and his spirit pain'd,
 Guise whose success on red^d Vimóri's plain,
 Full vengeance wreaking for young Joyeuse slain,
 Destroy'd the succours our allies had sent;
 Then, crown'd with fame, his way to Paris bent,
 Where Valois soon, with hate and anger swell'd,
 The triumph of his haughty foe beheld,
 Who, proud and smiling past, with scornful mien,
 Where less the subject than the king was seen.

The tamest spirit is alive to shame!
 E'en Valois felt this outrage on his fame,
 Strove his ambitious kinsman to restrain,
 And o'er the land his influence to regain.
 But vain the effort—love, respect and dread
 For him alike in ev'ry heart were dead;
 The daring people to rebellion train'd,
 Proclaim'd him tyrant when himself he reign'd,
 Combin'd, conspir'd, created false alarms,
 Each man a soldier, and each street in arms,
 A thousand ramparts in an instant rose,
 His power to brave, his leaguer'd troops oppose.

Guise, 'mid the tempest, ever calm and proud,⁶
 Restrain'd or rous'd the fury of the crowd,
 At his command the springs of treason held,
 And the vast body at a touch impell'd;
 Block'd in his palace by their furious bands,
 The monarch's life was in his rival's hands,
 But when his triumph most complete appear'd,
 Guise seem'd contented that Valois had fear'd,
 In pity check'd the guilty mob's excess,
 And left the pow'r of flight to his distress.
 Doing in short, whatever end he sought,
 More than a vassal less than rebel ought.

Who once the might of majesty has dar'd,
 Should burn the scabbard when the sword is bar'd.
 Guise, in his projects, strengthen'd from that day,
 'Saw he had gone too far to turn or stay;
 Tho' high he stood yet near was the abyss,
 The scaffold his should he the sceptre miss.
 At length, sole master of the rebel throng,
 Full of warm hope, in native courage strong,
 Back'd by his brothers, by his country lov'd,
 By Spain assisted and by Rome approv'd,
 He dar'd the shameful deeds of eld retrace,
 When of our first bold kings the craven race,
 Forc'd even at their birth from pow'r supreme,
 Conceal'd beneath the cowl the diadem,
 In some dark cloister pent, bewail'd their throne
 By tyrants seiz'd, their pomp and pleasure flown.

Valois, whose hate and fear watch'd ev'ry chance
 Which promis'd him revenge, the States of France
 Then held in Blois. To you who know them well
 Needs not their nature in detail to tell.
 There new abuses, found or fancied, yield
 To barren eloquence its annual field;
 Wise laws are fram'd—weak virtue to protect
 And punish crime—which never take effect;
 Of many counsels such the common end,
 To see all evils and not one amend.

Guise 'mid the assembled States, with haughty pride
 The presence of his injur'd prince defied.
 Sure of his projects, seated by the throne,
 Among a senate whom he knew his own,
 For, to their tyrant sold, the worthless band
 Sought but to place the sceptre in his hand.
 When, finding terror irksome, mercy vain,
 Valois determin'd to revenge and reign.

Each day the Guise with insults less restrain'd,
 Despis'd his ire, his enmity disdain'd,
 Nor ever dreamt his irritated prince
 Firmness enough for murder could evince.
 Blinded by Destiny, his hour was come;
 The King himself assisted at his doom.
 A hundred points,⁷ pouring unworthy death,
 Abated not his pride while pass'd one breath;
 Bloody and pale, perchance a terror yet,
 That brow his King with stern defial met.

Thus died th' all-powerful subject in whose mind,
 Virtue and vice in dazzling union join'd;
 The King whose throne he plotted to subdue,
 Permitted and reveng'd it basely too.

The horrid story soon to Paris flies;
 The frighten'd people fill the air with cries;
 Infirm and desolate Age, Women distrest,
 In crowds around their martyr's statue prest;
 All ranks, amid that instant danger, blend
 A father to avenge, the church defend;
 Guise's redoubted brother, now their chief,
 Excited to revenge their passionate grief,
 And more by interest than resentment spur'd,
 On ev'ry side to flames their fury stirr'd.

Mayne⁸ from his boyhood nurtur'd in alarms,
 Beneath the haughty Guise had studied arms,
 Heir to his policy alike and fame,
 To him the sceptre of the League now came:
 That boundless grandeur, to his soul so dear,
 For his lost brother quickly dried the tear:
 Reluctantly he serv'd: and Mayne to-day
 Loves better to revenge him than obey.
 That Mayne has oft undaunted courage shown,
 And a wise happy policy, I own;

Discordant spirits at his will he rules,
 Foes to their master, to their tyrant tools,
 Whose talents and their use so well he knows
 Advantage often from misfortune flows.
 Guise on the view with brighter splendour beam'd
 More great, heroic, not more dangerous deem'd.

Such is Mayenne, and such his pow'r of ill,
 The haughty League hopes triumph from his skill,
 And the presumptuous heart of young Aumale⁹
 His own proud courage animates in all;
 Aumale, dread buckler of their cause, whose fame
 Well merits of invincible the name;
 Soul of the League, amid the frequent fight,
 Mayenne directs Aumale its arm of might.

Meanwhile—your enemy, yet more mine own,
 'Neath whose hard statecraft the poor Flemings groan,
 That dangerous friend, that Catholic tyrant, who
 Ever from artifice his chief strength drew—
 Philip,¹⁰ conspiring with rebellious Mayne,
 Has arm'd our guilty rivals to sustain.
 Rome¹¹ which so many wounds should rather close,
 Rome ev'rywhere the torch of discord throws;
 He who of Christendom is father styl'd,
 To massacre and treason arms his child.
 Borne on all winds, to my astonish'd sight
 Misfortunes seem in Paris to unite,
 Till now, defenceless, subjectless, pursued,
 Valois to crave my succour is subdued.
 He thought me generous and was not deceiv'd,
 My country's misery long my heart had griev'd;
 At such near danger, all my rage controll'd,
 An injur'd brother only I behold,
 Pleasure and pride to duty I subject,
 And King the King's authority protect.
 No hostage taken and no treaty made¹²
 "Our fate's in our own courage, up," I said,

"With me to conquer or to die like men;"
 A noble pride inspir'd his bosom then.
 'Twere flattery to suppose a flame so bright
 That my example in his soul could light,
 Doubtless his virtue, rous'd at last by shame,
 Groan'd at the guilty ease which long o'ercame;
 Valois' soft nature needs misfortune's stings,
 Adversity is oft best nurse of kings.

Henry in such frank words the Queen address.
 While thus of England he the succours prest,
 The voice of victory from the rebel walls
 Already to his camp the chief recalls.
 A thousand youth to follow him prepare,
 The seas to traverse and the combat dare;
 Essex their leader,¹³ who of proud Castille
 Baffled the caution by his martial skill,
 How little dreamt he that his laurels bright
 Dishonourable death should ever blight!

But Henry waits them not: his gallant heart,
 Burning for glory, presses to depart.
 "Go!" spoke Eliza, "France demands you back;
 My warriors soon shall follow on your track;
 'Tis yours, not Valois' rule, they long to own,
 My friendship trusts them to your care alone;
 Amid the combat you will see them crowd,
 To emulate perchance to help you proud,
 There from your practice war's great art to learn,
 And thus serve England better in return.
 Soon may the League expire beneath your blows!
 Rome and the Spaniard are your real foes;
 Philip subdue: a great man need not fear
 Tho' Rome's vain thunders brattle in his ear;
 The freedom of the world revenge, regain;
 Abase the pride of Sixtus and of Spain.

His sire's true tyrant heir, less great and bold,
 As politic, in Philip we behold,

Dividing but to crush his neighbours still,
The despot dreams to rule the world at will.

Sixtus,¹⁴ from earth exalted to a throne,
With less of pow'r more haughtiness has shown:
Montalto's shepherd, rival now of kings,
In Paris as at Rome his influence brings,
Neath the proud splendour of that triple crown,
Would force and fetter even Philip down.
Violent, able, false and fair, the foe
Of all above, tyrant of all below,
E'en in my realm and court his snares he weaves,
And fills with plots the world which he deceives.

"Such are the enemies you must oppose.
In hostile efforts both against me rose;
This, combating the winds and waves in vain,
Strew'd with his shipwrecks and defeat the main;¹⁵
His life-blood on my ev'ry coast yet streams;
That, wisely quiet, fears me and esteems.

"Go then, your noble enterprise pursue;
If Mayne be crush'd, Rome will surrender too;
Its hate or favour you alone can bind,
Stern to the vanquish'd, to the victor kind,
Prompt to condemn but willing to forgive,
'Tis yours to quench or bid its thunders live."

BOOK IV.

ARGUMENT.

D'Aumale is on the point of getting possession of the camp of Henry III., when the hero, returning from England, combats the Leaguers, and changes the fortune of the fight. Discord consoles Mayenne and flies to Rome for help. Description of Rome under the reign of Sixtus V. Discord there meets Policy, returns with her to Paris, rouses the Sorbonne to insurrection, excites the Sixteen against the Parliament, and arms the monks. The magistrates who adhered to the royal party are delivered into the hands of the executioner. Troubles and horrible confusion in Paris.

WHILST thus their secret converse they pursued,
Weighing each measure for the public good,
And whatsoe'er deep science could afford
To combat, conquer, and to rule explor'd
—Seine on her bloody margin saw dismay'd
The League's bold banner to the winds display'd.

His champion gone, with restless doubts assail'd,
Valois the slow uncertain war bewail'd;
His wavering projects Bourbon's counsel need,
Sure with his aid in battle to succeed.
By these delays the League embolden'd grew,
And from the town their martial legions drew;
The proud Aumale, Nemours, and bold Brissac,
The fierce Saint Paul, la Châtre, Canillac,
Intrepid guardians of a guilty cause,
Their quick success the pow'rless monarch awes,
Who vainly now—thus oft repentant grieve
Attends on rash resolve—regrets his absent chief.

Amid the bands, whom hate or interest bound
 In treason's hostile cause, Joyeuse¹ was found;
 Who past by turns as pleas'd his wayward heart
 From crowds to solitude, from camps to court:
 Repentant now, and now a debauchee,
 The lone recluse, or courtier gay was he,
 A soldier now in costly armour burn'd,
 Now in dank cells degraded Nature mourn'd;
 From shrines where late with contrite tears he bow'd,
 Now rush'd to arm the fury of the crowd,
 Led them to fight and stain'd with kindred gore
 The hand which late the sacred censer bore.

But he, whose valour 'mid the rebel band
 Inspir'd most fear and horror in the land,
 Whose heart more brave, whose blade more red than all,
 'Twas thine, young prince, impetuous bold Aumale,
 A foe to laws, to quiet, and to kings,
 Whose noble birth from many a hero springs.

The choicest youth upon his footsteps tread,
 And o'er the land his ceaseless conquests spread;
 Now with loud clamour, now in silent fight,
 Beneath the bright sun, or the sheltering night
 Their restless troop on ev'ry side assail
 Th' astonish'd foe whose life-blood stains the vale.
 E'en thus his giant head where Athos rears,
 Or where the snow-capt Caucasus appears,
 The crag-born eagles, searching for their prey,
 Thro' clouds and vapour cleave their headlong way,
 The feather'd victim seize in middle air,
 Or from the fold the bleating lambkin tear,
 Then, screaming forth their triumph, swift ascend
 To their rude aëries, and the warm spoil rend.

Now full of martial hope, on glory bent,
 Aumale with these had pierc'd to Valois' tent;

With night the tumult and the panic grows,
 They bend, they tremble, yield beneath his blows.
 That stormy torrent's unresisted force
 Threatens destruction in its fatal course.

Already morning lent its doubtful ray
 When Mornay prest, impatient of delay,
 Where the proud turrets of the town appear;
 And heard the clamour with a startled ear;
 Onward he speeds, and sees his master's host,
 With Valois' army, in disorder lost.

"Heav'n's! is it thus that our return you greet?
 Henry to guard you comes—and what to meet?
 Flee you, my comrades!" At his words controll'd
 As, by the Capitol, in days of old,
 The name of Jove,³ when Sabine foes oppress,
 The flying bands of Romans could arrest,
 E'en so at Henry's name again they turn,
 They rally, march, with shame their bosoms burn,
 "Our hero comes," they cry, "our cause to aid,
 And certain victory sits upon his blade."

Scarce had the news their sinking spirits cheer'd,
 When on the field the gallant chief appear'd.
 Bright as the lightning in tempestuous skies,
 Their ranks he orders, to the van he flies;
 Death in his hand, and thunder in his glance,
 He fights, they follow—Fortune smiles on France.
 His chiefs encourag'd round their leader press,
 The Leaguers vanish and returns success.

Thus sinks the starry train of night away
 When glows the bright East with advancing day.
 In vain d'Aumale's example and command
 To stay the remnant of his fear-struck band;
 His voice one moment to the combat calls,
 Henry the next upon their pale rear falls;
 Their rallying files his threat'ning brow alarms,
 Their chief unites them and their fear disarms;

D'Aumale himself, reluctant in their flight,
 Is borne along—thus, from some cloud-capt height,
 'Mid ice and melting snows, some fragment riven
 Rolls from its parent rock no more to menace Heaven.

Now mad with rage, he stays and turns to show
 That brow so long a terror to the foe;
 Freed from the rabble, and despising life
 Sav'd with dishonour, he renews the strife,
 Checks e'en his wond'ring victor, till the foes
 In numbers gathering around him close,
 And Death, expectant of a noble prey,
 Drew near his fatal rashness to repay.

But Discord, trembling for her darling chief,
 His danger saw and flew to his relief;
 Between him and the foes that close pursue,
 Her vast impenetrable shield she threw,
 Which points to slaughter and whose sight can strike
 With fear or fury ev'ry heart alike.
 Daughter of Hell! inexorable fiend,
 Then first on earth thy heart to mercy lean'd;
 Thou sav'd'st a hero and prolong'd'st his breath
 With that same hand, the minister of death,
 That guilty hand which long with murder stain'd
 Had ne'er till now its cruel rage restrain'd.
 Bleeding and faint with wounds which gave no sore
 Back to the rebel town her chief she bore,
 With gentle care she staunch'd the bloody tide,
 And to his hurts a healing cure applied;
 But, while her skill his wasted strength restores,
 Her mortal poison to his heart she pours.
 Thus tyrants often the doom'd wretch deceive
 In cruel pity with a short reprieve,
 To aid their secret crimes his arm employ,
 And, when perfected, wantonly destroy.

Well Henry knew, in camps from childhood train'd,
 To push the advantage that his valour gain'd,
 And taught in war the worth of time to know,
 Boldly he prest upon the astonish'd foe:
 By his support and great example fir'd,
 Valois once more his struggling troops inspir'd;
 He bears the labour and defies alarm,
 Pain has its pleasure, peril has its charm.
 The chiefs unite; their aim at once succeeds,
 And the wild panic which their march precedes
 Scatt'ring the cohorts of their trembling foes,
 Spreads to the gates which scarce his course oppose.
 A groaning people for a warlike band,
 Can Mayne with such the pressing danger stand?
 A daughter here demands her slaughter'd sire,
 Brother o'er brother weeps, friends friends require;
 Each mourns the present and the future dreads;
 Thro' the tost body wild disunion spreads.
 They meet, advise obedience, or flight,
 All are irresolute, none dare the fight;
 So light and fickle is the mob, so near
 Their hasty courage and their causeless fear.

Mayne their weak dread with indignation eyed.
 His own vext soul successive plans divide:
 But Discord sudden on his musings broke,
 And hissing serpents her arrival spoke.

"Great heir," she utter'd, "of a mighty name!
 With me united our revenge to claim;
 Form'd by my laws, and nurtur'd as my son,
 Hear thy protectress and her counsels own.
 Fear not the feeble and inconstant crowd;
 Tho' the first slight reverse their hopes has cow'd,
 Yet are they mine, their hearts are in my hand,
 Soon shall they second what our skill has plann'd,

Prey to my rage, and sprinkled with my gall,
Boldly shall combat and exulting fall."

She ceas'd, and, swift as lightning thro' the skies,
With active wing her chosen course she plies.
To her the general trouble and alarms
Which reign'd around seem'd redolent of charms;
Her parching breath its baleful influence shed,
The blossoms perish'd and the fruit lay dead;
The corn unripen'd languish'd on the ground;
The stars grew pale, the heav'ns obscure around;
While the loud thunders growling as she past,
Seem'd thro' each frighten'd bosom death to cast.

A whirlwind bore her to the fertile shores
Where rapid Po his ample current pours.

At length her cruel eyes on Rome inclin'd,
Rome, once the shrine and terror of mankind,
Rome, whose great lot in peace or war to stand
In ev'ry age the queen of ev'ry land:
By arms alone her empire rear'd of old
Soon 'neath its yoke each rival pow'r controll'd;
Wherever then it flew, her eagle saw
Earth's proudest monarchs own her conquering law.
More mildly now the sceptre tho' she wields,
Yet e'en the victor to its dictate yields,
Her counsels laws, her will the only arms,
With which the world she governs and alarms.

Beneath the Capitol, where wont to reign
Victorious Mars, where tower'd Bellona's fane,
Weak well-fed priests, each mumbling his long mass,
With careless foot o'er crumbling heroes pass;
Where laurell'd Scipios, virtuous Catos shone,
A pontiff sits upon the Cæsars' throne
In absolute pow'r, that throne an altar, where
Sceptre and censer both the same hands bear.

Here God ordain'd his infant church to rest,
 At last triumphant tho' so long oppress;
 Pure lessons here his first Apostle taught,
 With truth, simplicity and meekness fraught.
 Awhile his followers his path pursue,
 The more respected as they humbler grew;
 Their modest worth all idle show disdain'd;
 Their rigid virtue poverty maintain'd;
 Proud only of that wealth the good desire,
 With tranquil breast they met the martyr's fire.
 Time which proves all with change their manners tried,
 God gave them grandeur to chastise our pride.
 Rome from that hour grew powerful and profane,
 And wicked counsels mark'd her alter'd reign;
 Rebellion, poison, treachery and blood,
 The horrid base on which her empire stood,
 Christ's blushless ministers his holy place
 With incest and adultery disgrace,
 While Rome with anger bending to the rods
 Of Christian tyrants wept her heathen gods.
 Of late a wiser, worthier part they fill,
 Fewer their crimes or veil'd with better skill;
 No more the dread of kings, their umpire grown,
 Rome makes the rights of church and people known:
 Again long-exil'd virtue's modest mien
 Beneath the triple diadem is seen;
 But, in our artful times, her highest praise
 Flows from the skill with which mankind she sways.

Sixtus then rul'd the church and Roman state.
 If to be honour'd with the name of great,
 Austere, false, fear'd to be it needs alone,
 Among the greatest kings then Sixtus shone.
 To years of artifice^s his pow'r was due,
 For years, his real nature hid from view,
 As if unworthy on the throne to reign
 He seem'd to shun the rank he long'd to gain.

Deep in the Vatican, beneath the shield
 Of papal power, lay Policy conceal'd ;
 The child of Interest, by Ambition bred,
 Whence Fraud and Flattery o'er the world have spread ;
 Skill'd in evasion, this ingenious pest,
 In ready smiles and simple beauty drest,
 With piercing eyes which, hostile to repose,
 Defy sweet sleep their restless lids to close,
 Still loves deceit and treachery to use,
 The dazzled glance of Europe to confuse ;
 The subtle falsehoods which her speech display'd
 Seem in the very garb of truth array'd ;
 The words of God to stamp the cheat she blends,
 And Heav'n employs to work her baneful ends.

When Discord's welcome form first caught her eyes,
 With looks mysterious to her breast she flies,
 First soothes and flatters with malignant smile,
 Then, in a tone where sorrow reign'd the while,
 "Alas!" she said, "those happy days are o'er
 When flock'd mankind my sceptre to adore,
 When credulous Europe subject to my hand
 Bow'd to my dictates as to God's command.
 I spoke, and Kings descending from the throne
 Knelt at these feet my influence to own ;
 Then at my beck War's banner was unfurl'd,
 And thunders darted o'er the trembling world,
 Then life and death depended on my word,
 Kingdoms I gave, confounded, or restor'd.
 That time is over: Gallic senates wring
 From my weak hand the thunders I would fling,
 Friends to the church and enemies to me,
 From error's veil the wakening world they free ;
 Their wisdom first detected me, and tore
 From my fond schemes the mask of truth they wore.
 Then teach me, Discord, to thy cause allied,
 To cheat their virtue and chastise their pride ;

Come, let thy torch my long-quencht lightnings fire,
 Let Gallia feel our desolating ire,
 And while our ravages o'er earth shall glow,
 Let her proud prince our earliest vengeance know."

From Rome's vain luxury and pride remote,
 Far from her shrines to worldly pomp devote,
 Whose outward glare the world so well can cheat
 Religion held her humble still retreat;
 In peace profound she with her God remain'd,
 While upon earth her holy name profan'd,
 Fear'd by the blind mob, slighted by the great,
 Still lent its fair excuse to tyrant hate.
 To bless her study and her lot to bear,
 Still for her foe ascends her secret pray'r;
 Meek, unadorn'd, in native beauty bright,
 Her artless charms she hid from vulgar sight,
 Nor sought the false praise of the busy crowd,
 Who, at her shrine, to worship Fortune, bow'd.

A holy passion deep within her dwelt
 Which long her fond heart had for Henry felt;
 A day she saw when his avenging hand
 Again should rear her altars in the land,
 When, God's own ministry no more revild,
 The mighty hero should become her child:
 E'en now his soul for that glad hour aspires,
 Which moves too slowly for his fond desires.

Sudden the fiends her solitude surprise.
 To God the captive lifts her tearful eyes,
 Imploring mercy, but, to prove her heart,
 Unhelpt He leaves her to their guilty art.
 Still doom'd their hate and enmity to brook,
 From her meek brow its sacred veil they took,
 O'er their foul limbs the honour'd vestment spread,
 And in the fair disguise to Paris sped.

Soon where old Sorbonne⁴ rears his spacious pile
 Stole artful Policy with ready smile.
 There met those sages, honour'd by the land,
 Sacred interpreters of Heav'n's command,
 Who, to their church and to their monarch true,
 A bright example gave to human view,
 A manly vigour in their rule reveal'd,
 And long to error offer'd a sure shield.
 But ah! how rarely mortal virtue knows
 In all its forms temptation to oppose.
 And here the fiend her sweetest aspect takes,
 With honied words their melting virtue shakes;
 To gain ambition she displays a crown,
 Here speaks of power, there promises renown,
 In different shapes she different breasts invades,
 Now by a mitre, now by gold persuades,
 Fear holds the weak, while lur'd by well-tim'd praise,
 Truth's sacred cause the dazzled sage betrays.

But now their councils doubt and clamour guide,
 In tumult met, in tumult they decide.
 Truth flies the scene in sorrow and in shame
 While thus their mad decision they proclaim.
 "From our pure church alone all order springs,
 'Tis hers to make, absolve and punish kings,
 In us that church, her power in us alone,
 We hate our monarch and his rule disown."⁶
 Fierce Discord heard, and smiling trac'd in gore
 The shameless sentence which they sign'd and swore.

Then o'er the land she hasten'd to impart
 Her great design to ev'ry factious heart.
 The busy accents of her venom'd tongue
 The stirring tale thro' each lone convent rung,
 Whence a pale group came gathering at the sound
 Of spectre forms in willing slavery bound.
 "My sons," she cried, "my sacred aspect own,
 Rise from your sleep to guard my menac'd throne;

Religion's interests your aid demand,
 And this keen sword which sparkles in my hand,
 This blade, so fear'd by our proud foes, is given
 To work the vengeance of insulted Heaven;
 Now is the hour to leave each cloister'd shade,
 Now be your holy zeal for God display'd;
 Teach fickle France that owns a tyrant's rod,
 To slay her monarch is to serve her God.
 Remember how blest Levi's sacred race
 Obtain'd of old their honourable place,
 That place they merited, that pow'r they gain'd,
 When most their hands with Israel's blood were stain'd:⁶
 France once could boast of happier better times,
 Fraternal hands chastis'd fraternal crimes;
 When, haply spar'd too long, Coligny bled,
 To the rich sacrifice your precepts led;
 Blood flow'd around—O let it flow once more,
 Inspire the people who my reign adore."

Sudden she ceas'd, then gave her signal round,
 And each wild zealot gather'd at the sound.
 Straight to the town their solemn march she led,
 Christ's holy banner floating o'er her head;
 Their reckless bigotry, with furious cries,
 Seem'd with their treason to unite the skies,
 Join'd humble pray'r with blasphemy profane,
 The words of Abel with the deeds of Cain.
 Audacious priests to feeble soldiers turn'd,⁷
 Wak'd the loud trumpet and in armour burn'd,
 The God of peace before their footsteps borne,
 That God whose dictates they forsake and scorn.

Skill'd in that art, so requisite to kings,
 To feed the source whence vulgar error springs,
 And knowing well how oft mankind unite
 Fanatic rage with meek Religion's light,
 Mayne from afar their weak attempt surveys,
 With secret wonder but with open praise.

At length the pious scandal he approves,
 The sage's ire, the soldier's mirth which moves.
 Meanwhile the people, with discordant cries,
 Of hope, joy, anger pierce the patient skies.
 As panic oft audacity succeeds,
 So fear to fury in a moment leads;
 E'en thus the mighty Ruler of the deep,
 Bids the wave slumber or the tempest sweep.

Discord next chose, for crime distinguish'd most,
 Twice eight,⁸ her council, from the factious host.
 Proud of their mistress, eager to destroy,
 They mount her reeking car with savage joy.
 Fraud, Frenzy, Treason, Death prepare their way,
 And streams of blood declare their fatal sway.
 Born in obscurity, in baseness nurst,
 Those honor'd most who hated kings the worst;
 By the mad rabble rais'd to equal state,
 Their rival pow'r Mayne view'd with jealous hate.
 Such Discord's game, so tyrants on the throne
 Oft find their minion's influence match their own.⁹
 Thus when the wild winds in their fury reign
 O'er the broad Rhone or sweep the tranquil Seine,
 Stirr'd from its utmost depths, the stagnant mud
 Mingles its sable with their silver flood;
 Thus thro' some city, when the conquering fire
 Rages unchecked, and mighty domes expire,
 From the red roofs in one wide ruin roll'd,
 Melts the base metal with the purer gold.

Tumult and treason thus all hearts dismay'd.
 Themis alone the dire contagion stay'd:
 Nor fear, nor hope, nor thirst of pow'r avails,
 With steady hand she held the equal scales:
 Still to her temple, from suspicion free,
 Would simple equity for safety flee.
 For there a Senate sat, by all rever'd,
 Friendly to innocence, by evil fear'd,

Which, of its prince the organ and support,
 Its honest course between the crowd and court
 Held on, and wisely trusting in the throne,
 Made there the wishes of the country known.
 Ambitious only for the general good,
 Treason alike and tyranny withstood,
 With manly courage yet with reverence due
 The line 'twixt slavery and submission drew,
 Still the just cause of liberty maintain'd,
 Knew Rome, rever'd her, but her power restrain'd.

So long yet vainly spar'd, around her shrine,
 Fir'd by success their lawless bands combine.
 Bussy,¹⁰ a blustering fencer, at their head,
 Whom to the post superior daring led,
 Rudely upon their solemn council broke,
 And, insolent of pow'r, with angry menace spoke.

"Ye hireling champions of the mazy laws,
 Who fondly vindicate the royal cause,
 Slaves who for gold your country's good betray,
 Thrive 'mid her woes and on her weakness prey,
 Cowards in war, in peace as tyrants known,
 Obey the people and our dictates own.
 Mankind was free till monarchs rose to bind;
 We claim the rights our ancestors resign'd;
 The rank we gave your cruelties abuse;
 Tir'd of obedience we the yoke refuse.
 The swelling titles, the despotic pow'r
 Long fear'd and hated shall no more o'ertow'r;
 Judge in the people's name, your office hold,
 By no proud monarch but by us controll'd,
 Pursue the wise example Sorbonne lends,
 Or dread the fate which stubborn guilt attends."

He ceas'd—none breath'd in answer to his call;
 A noble silence reign'd throughout the hall.

Ev'n so of old, o'erpow'r'd yet unsubdued,
 'Mid smoking walls, thro' streets with ruin strew'd,
 Rome's hoary senators¹¹ with tranquil glance
 Proudly beheld the Gaul and death advance.

But now, with wrath inflam'd, nor free from dread,
 "Obey or follow me!" fierce Bussy said.

Then Harlay rose, the senate's sire and guide,
 Harlay, for justice and for courage tried;
 His life he renders to their bloody hands,
 And with calm brow the galling chain demands.
 Around their chief a fearless band await,
 Burning to share the honour of his fate,
 Victims to loyalty and arm'd to bear,
 The people's tyranny and hate they dare.
 Arise, O Muse, record each honour'd name,
 So dear to France and consecrate their fame.
 The good de Thou, Molé, Scarron, Bayeul,
 Th' impartial Potier and the young Longueil,
 (Longueil, with genius and with virtue grac'd,
 Gifts that but serv'd his bitter doom to haste)
 Like culprits fetter'd are in triumph borne,
 Thro' lawless crowds that vent on them their scorn,
 To those dark tow'rs,¹² within whose horrid cells
 With gory Crime too oft wrong'd Virtue dwells.
 Thus Sorbonne fell, the Senate was no more!
 All right and law thus Faction triumph'd o'er!

But what this concourse, why these sorrowing cries?
 What forms of torture strike my shuddering eyes?
 Who are the victims that a mad command
 Sends to the cold grave by a hangman's hand?
 Is this of spotless honour the foul meed,
 This the vile death to Virtue now decreed?
 Blush not, ye heroes! for no withering spot
 Shall the proud pages of your story blot.

Fame's fairest flow'rs shall hallow with their bloom,
Till time shall be no more, the patriot martyr's tomb.

Discord the while with fiendish pleasure view'd
Her plans succeed, her dread advice pursued,
Proudly, in tranquil cruelty, survey'd
The dire effects that civil war display'd.
In those red walls a groaning people pin'd,
Themselves divided, 'gainst their prince combin'd,
Whose strife and treason serv'd but to enhance
The wounds and wretchedness of prostrate France:
Danger without, within disorder found,
Rage, ruin, death on ev'ry side abound.

BOOK V.

ARGUMENT.

The besieged are sharply pressed. Discord excites Jacques Clement to leave Paris in order to assassinate the King; and summons from the depths of Hell the demon of Fanaticism to conduct the parricide. Midnight sacrifice by the Leaguers to the Infernal Spirits. Henry III. is murdered. Sentiments of Henry IV. on the event. He is recognised King by the Army.

MEANWHILE advanced those dreadful engines near
That in their rude breasts carried death and fear;
From many a brazen mouth the torrent falls
With dreadful thunder on the hostile walls.

The mob's wild insolence, the rebel League,
Mayne's open treason or conceal'd intrigue,
The shameful lessons that the clergy taught,
A vain resistance to the hero brought.
Victory still shone upon his glorious path,
Tho' Spain oppos'd, and Rome denounc'd her wrath:
But Rome no more was dreaded by the world,
Vainly were now her once dire thunders hurl'd,
And Spain, whose wonted sloth her hate destroy'd,
The needful succour to their wants denied:
Thro' France her soldiers ranging wide and wild,
Paris abandoning, our cities spoil'd:
Perfidiously she waited the sure hour
When the weak League might sink beneath her pow'r;
False friendship thus its dangerous succour gave,
Less prompt to shield, than watchful to enslave.

When of one bigot the determined hate
Seem'd for awhile to change the course of fate.

Ye sons of Paris, born in happier times,
Free from the pest of war, unstain'd with crimes,
Forgive the Muse if now her honest verse
The guilty story of your sires rehearse,
For not to you their infamy descends,
Your well-known loyalty their crime amends.

Oft in the church a hermit class we find
By stricter rules of discipline combin'd,
Whose rigid votaries, from mankind remote,
By solemn vows their days to God devote,
Dull to the voice of joy who know not life,
Or known, impatient of its fraud and strife,
In cold dark cells have solitude embrac'd,
And fled the world their talents might have grac'd.
Others more wise, more useful to the land,
Have sway'd the state, or giv'n the church command,
Embark'd on life its manners have pursued,
Too oft their virtues by success subdued;
Their hard ambition then, in faction skill'd
With foul intrigues each groaning country fill'd.
Thus, by some mad perversion, mortals still
Make perfect good the source of greatest ill.

Those who of Dominic had embrac'd the creed,
Long fix'd in Spain, of pow'r possess the lead,
From meaner offices they quickly past,
And trod the palaces of kings at last.
In France respected, long their order grew,
And equal zeal with smaller influence knew,
Protected, honour'd, peaceable and blest,
Until it warm'd a traitor in its breast.

Clement,¹ from boyhood in the cloister nurst,
With gloomy mind and savage virtue curst,

By nature credulous and feeble, sped
 Where'er the torrent of rebellion led.
 Discord with joy upon his frenzied heart,
 Breath'd the foul poison of her deadly art;
 Prostrate each day by holy altars laid,
 He wearied Heav'n with guilty cries for aid,
 Till, soil'd with dust, and ashes in his hair,
 Aloud he utter'd this detested pray'r.

"O thou Almighty and Avenging God,
 Whose power can punish, and whose dreadful nod
 Can save or slay, speak, shall thy children still
 Groan 'neath this load of undeserv'd ill?
 Why arm the guilty hands oppos'd to thee?
 Why bless the perjur'd and the murd'rer free?
 Lord! in thy glory and thy might arise—
 Descend in thunder from thy native skies—
 Sorrow and death the land have long o'erflow'd—
 Remove the monarch in thy rage bestow'd—
 Arm and descend—let, let thy lightnings rush
 The impious army of our foes to crush—
 Let kings, let soldiers and their chiefs be driven
 Like scatter'd leaves before the blasts of Heaven—
 Sav'd by thy hand to thee our hearts shall raise
 From crimson fields a song of grateful praise."

Discord, attentive, as she cleav'd the air,
 Heard the dread sound and bore to Hell the pray'r.
 Instant she summon'd from those seats of woe,
 The fiercest tyrant of the shades below,
 Man's direst curse, Fanaticism styl'd,
 Religion's erring and unnatural child,
 Arm'd to defend, to succour his employ,
 His fatal friendship serves but to destroy.

'Twas he of old by Raba's³ plain who led
 The race of Ammon kindred blood to shed,

Where weeping mothers brought to Moloch's fane
 The smoking entrails of their children slain.
 Jephtah,³ obedient to his savage art,
 Swore the rash vow and pierc'd his daughter's heart.
 His influence mov'd when Calchas' impious breath⁴
 Claim'd from her sire Iphigenia's death.
 France, in thy forests, long the demon stay'd,
 And guilty incense to Teutates⁵ paid;
 Not yet forgot the blood thy Druids pour'd,
 O'er the rude altars of their angry Lord.
 From pagan Rome his cruel sentence rose,
 "Strike, kill, exterminate your Christian foes."
 When Rome at length to holier tenets leant,
 From the ras'd Capitol his course he bent,
 And, with his rage all Christendom inflam'd,
 In former martyrs future agents claim'd.
 He form'd in England⁶ the seditious band
 That rais'd on her weak King a murderous hand:
 He lit those fires whose history still shall stain
 The blood-writ annals of fanatic Spain;⁷
 And Lusitania, thy fair capital has seen
 Those solemn butcheries of bigot spleen
 Where the vext Hebrew is condemn'd to bleed,
 In death still faithful to his fathers' creed.

The fiend, who oft in holy garb had drest
 From mortal view to hide his purpose best,
 Now, from those seats where reign eternal glooms,
 For different crimes a different shape assumes:
 Art and audacity a form compose,
 Which the full height and graceful aspect shows
 Of the proud Guise, that haughty Chief who late
 Defied his master and oppress the state,
 Whose pow'r e'en death unable to subdue
 O'er hapless France continued warfare drew:
 A dreadful helmet on the forehead glar'd;
 His ready hand a murderous poniard bar'd;

Fast from his wounded side the bubbling gore
 Stream'd his rent surcoat's useless splendour o'er:
 Seem'd as each wound, whence fresh the torrent pour'd
 Open'd its dumb mouth and revenge implor'd.

Drest in this sad and dreadful shape he flies
 To the dark cell where gloomy Clement lies.
 Black superstition and mistaken zeal
 Watch round his bed and on his visions steal:
 The bigot's feverish brow and broken rest
 Told the fierce struggles of his troubled breast;
 With haughty accent and majestic air
 "The Lord receives," he cried, "thy secret pray'r,
 But fitter incense must thy love convey,
 Than ceaseless complaints and idle vows display:
 He asks for other offerings at thine hands,
 Thy meditated gift his will demands.
 Think'st thou, if erst, her native land to save,
 Judith to God but clamorous sorrow gave,
 If fears for life or friends her breast had known,
 Judith^s had seen Bethulia's walls o'erthrown?
 Such the example Clement should pursue,
 And such the victim he must offer too.
 E'en now thou blushest at the deed delay'd—
 Quick, let this sure and consecrated blade
 From her weak King our groaning country free,
 Revenge the League, the Church, the world and me.
 As he his foe by murder foul destroys,
 Let the same death his perfidy chastise.
 Nor let the name inspire thy soul with fear,
 His crime in thee a virtue will appear.
 The deed is lawful which the church defends,
 Murder is just, and Heav'n the blow commends,
 Nay more, commands, instructs me that its will
 Has fix'd on thee its vengeance to fulfil:
 Blest if 'twere thine to work at once its hate
 And join the Bourbon in his sov'reign's fate,

Then might our country from their despot pow'r
 Preserv'd by thee—But ah! not this the hour:
 Henry must live awhile, insulted Heaven
 The glory of his fall to other hands has given.
 Do thou the deed thy jealous God demands,
 Receive and use the present of his hands."

The phantom spoke, and, from his side, a blade
 By Hatred steeped in Stygian waves display'd;
 To Clement's grasp the fatal gift he threw,
 Then downward to his native Hell withdrew.

The young recluse, too easily deceiv'd,
 Heav'n's interests trusted to his care believ'd;
 With solemn awe the deadly sword he kist,
 And, kneeling, pray'd the Almighty to assist;⁹
 Full of the horrid fiend whose fury guides,
 With saintlike air on murder he decides.

How weak is man, how soon his wayward mind,
 Becomes to error, nay to crime, resign'd!
 E'en while its ev'ry thought on murder dwelt,
 A peaceful happiness his bosom felt;
 Cheer'd by those lofty feelings which inspire
 The guileless martyr at his funeral pyre,
 Tranquil yet resolute, with downcast eyes,
 He prays to Heav'n whose dictate he defies,
 Unbending virtue on his brow imprest,
 While lurk'd the whetted poniard 'neath his vest.
 His friends, instructed in the guilty plan,
 Before him strew fresh garlands as they ran;
 With holy wonder fill'd his steps attend,
 In flame his courage and his aim commend,
 Enrol his name amid the martyr'd band
 Whose shrines in Rome such reverence command,
 Call him the champion of their land, and raise
 Unanimous to him their songs of praise.

With far less transport to the stake of yore,
 Our Christian sires their suffering brethren bore,
 Envied the honours of their burning biers,
 And kist the traces of their feet with tears.
 The steady Christian, the fanatic blind,
 Often in both one character we find,
 The same stern courage, the same high desires,
 Crime has its heroes, error has its fires.
 False zeal or true, decide as best we can,
 The boldest villain seems the greatest man!

Mayne, whose keen glance beheld the coming blow,
 Conceal'd his knowledge of the lurking foe;
 For skill'd in vice, he sought, with prudent aim,
 The profit to secure yet 'scape the shame;
 To wilder rebels he the task resign'd
 To fire the passions of that bigot mind.

But while the League with flow'rs the traitor crown,
 And lead his steps in triumph from the town,
 By guilty means, a sacrilegious band
 The future fortunes of their cause demand.
 Long had the Queen¹⁰, inquisitive and bold,
 Essay'd the odious science to unfold,
 And lov'd those magic secrets to pursue
 Which always criminal are rarely true;
 With her the people, in each age and clime
 The servile copyist of the courtier's crime,
 Seiz'd with a love of novelty unite
 In guilty crowds to view the wizard rite.
 Dark was the night, within a gloomy cave,
 Where one pale torch unearthly lustre gave,
 They met: around them silence held her reign,
 So dull and deep one scarce might fear restrain:
 There, grimly frowning 'mid the vaulted gloom,
 Rose a mean altar on a mouldering tomb,

On which, the objects of their rage and fear,
 The hated statues of the Kings appear.
 Their impious hands upon the horrid shrine
 With forms of Hell had trac'd the name divine.
 Beneath the black walls smoking cauldrons stood,
 Where soak'd the threat'ning lance in human blood.
 Their priest¹¹, a son of that devoted band,
 Who chas'd, revil'd, proscrib'd in ev'ry land,
 From age to age the deadly curse have borne,
 Their hapless lives expos'd to daily scorn,
 Yet, spite of all, retain'd, where'er they rang'd,
 Their ancient superstitions still unchanged.

Around the Jew the furious Leaguers crowd;
 Their impious rite begins with clamour loud.
 Their murderous arms in human gore bedyed
 Pierce with rude blows their imag'd monarch's side;
 With fiercer anger and with greater dread,
 The bust of Henry to the ground they tread,
 And deem that death obedient to their will
 Shall soon the measure of their rage fulfil.¹²

While thus, in wild exuberance of hate,
 That bloody show anticipates their fate,
 Pray'rs mix'd with horrid blasphemy they pour,
 And Hell and Heav'n and God himself implore,
 Ask the dread lightning and the thunder's rage,
 And on their side the infernal host engage.

Such in Gilboa¹³ was the secret spell
 The foul witch offer'd to the fiends of Hell
 When the cold grave, before affrighted Saul
 Gave back the buried Samuel at her call.
 Such the stern prophecy of Judah's ill¹⁴
 The false seers utter'd from Samaria's hill:
 Such the dread sentence of impending doom
 Ateius breath'd against the arms of Rome.¹⁵

Awhile they stood in silence and in fear,
 Curious the answer of his words to hear;
 God grants their wish, and Nature's changeless laws
 A few brief moments from their functions pause:
 An awful sound the solemn silence broke,
 And the murk vault in hollow murmurs spoke;
 The reign of night redoubled lightnings gild,
 And with a lurid light the dark scene fill'd;
 High 'mid the flames, with light and glory crown'd,
 Upon his foes victorious Henry frown'd,
 Around his brow the laurel of command,
 And Gallia's sceptre shining in his hand.
 With sudden fury rage the conquering fires,
 The thunders dart, the impious shrine expires;
 The guilty band disperse in dumb affright
 To hide their terror and their crime in night.

Those fearful cries, that thunder, and the flame
 The King's inevitable fate proclaim;
 God from on high had number'd his last day,
 And from his dark path hid the favouring ray.
 Impatient Death his promis'd victim eyed:
 To crush the monarch Heav'n with crime complied.

Clement undaunted to the royal tent,
 Thro' hostile guards and cautious sentries went:
 "He came," he said, "by heav'nly wisdom led
 To fix the crown upon his sov'reign's head,
 And weighty secrets in his ear to tell"—
 They doubt, interrogate, observe him well,
 They fear some mystery in the garb he wore;
 Tranquil and firm their scrutiny he bore;
 Their doubts his meek simplicity deceives,
 And each the truth of his discourse believes.

Unmov'd the traitor meets his monarch's gaze;
 No quivering fear nor eager haste betrays

His purpos'd crime: the ready lie that hung
 Round his false heart was echoed by his tongue.
 "Permit, great King, my humble voice to raise
 To Heav'n that o'er you guards its thanks and praise,
 And that my grateful heart the pow'r should bless,
 Whose justice soon shall crown you with success;
 Potier, Villeroy, for virtue, prudence tried,
 Remain, 'mid foes, still faithful to your side;
 Harlay, whose fearless zeal so oft has cow'd
 The rebel wildness of the fickle crowd,
 Ev'n from his dungeon ev'ry heart unites,
 Collects your subjects and the League affrights.
 God who rejects the powerful and the wise,
 And oft the weakest for his work employs,
 To Harlay's presence deign'd my steps to guide—
 Taught from his mouth and by his light supplied,
 Important letters for my King I bear
 By Harlay trusted to my faithful care."

Blessing the happy change that Heav'n had wrought,
 The King with eager joy the letters caught:
 "How shall my love," he cried, "best find a way
 Thy zeal to recompense, thy service pay?"
 Then forth his arm to raise and greet him threw—
 Swift from his sleeve the fiend his weapon drew,
 And plung'd it in the monarch's fenceless breast:
 The guards with horror and alarm possess,
 Rush in the daring murderer to chastise;
 Their tardy vengeance with contempt he eyes.
 Proud of the deed, discharg'd to Rome his debt,
 Death, his best recompense, he smiling met.
 Saviour of France, of Christendom the shield,
 Heav'n all its joys, to welcome him, reveal'd,
 The martyr's palm he sought, and, this acquir'd,
 Blest the red hands that gave it, and expir'd.

O terrible delusion, strangely blind!
 Worthy the hate and pity of mankind!

Less guilty of the deed perchance than those
 Dishonest teachers, to their master foes,
 Who spread their fatal poison, to seduce
 The unsettled reason of a weak recluse.

But now the final hour¹⁶ approach'd, the light
 Grew dim and doubtful to the monarch's sight:
 His weeping courtiers throng'd around his bed;
 Thro' all the common loss infectious spread.
 As secret plans in different bosoms prest,
 Was grief, dissembled or sincere, exprest;
 Some pleas'd by love of change and hope of gain
 Bewail'd but slightly for their sov'reign slain:
 Some rapt in private interests of their own
 Mourn'd not their master but their fortune flown.
 But, noble Henry,¹⁷ 'mid their louder sighs,
 The tears of genuine sorrow fill'd thine eyes;
 He was thy rival, but, in hours like this,
 Each selfish feeling generous hearts dismiss;
 Remembering but your early mutual love,
 Interest in vain with thy compassion strove,
 And thy rare virtue scarcely seem'd to know
 His death to thee a sceptre would bestow.

Valois to Henry turn'd their parting look
 Tho' death hung heavy on his eyes, and took
 In his faint grasp the hero's manly hand
 —“ Restrain these generous tears, this grief command—
 An outrag'd universe my dirge shall sing—
 'Tis yours to fight, to reign—revenge your King.
 I die, and leave you on a dangerous shore,
 Strew'd with my wrecks where ceaseless tempests roar;
 To you, most worthy, does my throne descend;
 Enjoy the right your arm can best defend;
 But know that thunders gird it, lightnings tear,
 And fear, O fear the God that seats you there.
 Soon from these guilty tenets undeceiv'd
 May his pure worship be by you believ'd.

Adieu—be happy: may kind angels guard
 Your precious life from murder's searching sword:
 You know the League; its bow when Treason drew
 Thro' me the deadly shaft was aim'd at you;
 A day may come when their barbarian hate
 —Spare him just Heav'n! forbid it envious Fate!
 Permit"—He ceas'd, inexorable death
 Ere clos'd the generous pray'r cut short his breath.

At Paris when the monarch's fate was known,
 A guilty joy on ev'ry aspect shone;
 With cries of victory the air they rend,
 Care is forgotten, labour at an end.
 Their brows with flow'ry garlands they array
 And consecrate to yearly feasts the day.
 Bourbon they deem'd of ev'ry aid bereft
 Save what his valour and his glory left;
 Can he with these the strengthen'd League restrain,
 The rage of rebel France and hostile Spain,
 The fear'd, the fatal hate of Rome appease,
 The gold of the new world more strong than these?
 Already some whose interests led them more
 The breach to widen than the state restore,
 'Neath fine-drawn scruples their desertion hide
 And basely separate from Henry's side.
 Not thus the rest, who seem a warmer zeal
 E'en from the treason of a part to feel,
 Those gallant chieftains, Givry and d'Aumont,
 Sancy, the great Montmórency, Crillon,¹³
 For faith and friendship tried, in war renown'd,
 Whose glorious efforts victory long had crown'd,
 Of wavering France the rightful master own,
 By birth and merit worthiest of her throne;
 Less form'd to bandy words than swords to bear,
 Eternal fealty to his rule they swear,
 True to their altars, to their sov'reign true
 Where honour calls they fearlessly pursue.

To these the King—"Your courage must regain
The rank which else my sires have left in vain;
Nor ermin'd lords are here, nor holy hand
Of priest to consecrate our high command:
The pomp, the pageantry that circle kings
Adorn but strengthen not a throne, nor springs
From these, my claim; 'twas on a shield of yore
To our first kings their faith your fathers swore,
Such, some good victory won, shall be the shrine
Where Gallia's ancient crown your hands shall give to mine."

He spoke; and forth his glowing legions led
His throne to merit, marching at their head.

BOOK VI.

ARGUMENT

After the death of Henry III., the States of the League assemble in Paris to choose a King. Whilst occupied in their deliberations, Henry IV. assaults the town: the assembly separate: its members fight on the ramparts: description of the combat. Apparition of Saint Louis to Henry IV.

IN ancient days a sacred law prevail'd,
 When death's rude hand the tottering throne assail'd,
 And in each shrunken vein the failing tide
 Of royal blood, so dear to France, was dried,
 Their primal right again the people claim
 To choose a master and new statutes frame;
 Th' assembled States in general voice combine,
 Elect a sov'reign and his pow'r define;
 Thus our good ancestors of old decreed
 To Charles's race that Capet should succeed.¹

Firm in their treason, shameless, blind and bold,
 The League conspire these solemn States to hold,²
 As if one monarch's murder gave the right
 To raise another to that envied height;
 Beneath the pageant of a throne conceal'd,
 Whose sacred splendour should their project shield,
 They judg'd it easier Henry to defeat
 And the weak reason of the people cheat:
 Grac'd by the royal name they fondly deem
 That each dark treason shall the holier seem,

That France, accustom'd to the regal sway,
Howe'er obtained, would willingly obey.

Led by an arrogant erroneous pride,
Each stubborn champion of the guilty side,
Soldier and priest, d'Aumale, Nemours, Lorraine,
The high ambassadors of Rome and Spain,
Meet in the Louvre where wild Rebellion flings
Its scorn and insult o'er departed kings;
And pamper'd luxury that idly feeds
On public want the noisy council leads.
There no wise prince, nor high-born lords attend,
Whose rank and worth their judgments might commend,
Who, near the throne, their country's rights declare,
And without pow'r its honour'd semblance wear:
There no firm guardian of insulted laws
Rais'd his frank voice in Freedom's menac'd cause,
Nor there its head the Gallie lily rear'd,
But foreign pomp with foreign forms appear'd;
Prepar'd for Mayne there stood a chair of state,
Beneath whose canopy Rome's Nuncio sate;
This awful scroll upon its front was seen—
"Kings of the earth, whose guilty hands have been
Long stain'd with blood, your tyranny restrain,
Let Valois' death instruct you how to reign."

With faction's voice the lofty chamber sounds,
And ev'ry eye the veil of error bounds;
Here some, corrupted by Iberia's gold,
To her worst foe their country's freedom sold;
There mean ambition, slave to Rome, pursues
Its selfish ends and foreign honour woos,
In specious words breathes forth his earnest pray'r
That Rome to Gallia should extend her care.
Their hope and aim that hateful shrine to raise
The guilty monument of monkish days,³

Whose heavy yoke Spain suffers yet abhors,
 Which serves with blood the God whom it adores,
 With erring measures works pernicious ends,
 And shames the pure religion it defends;
 As if again those wretched times restor'd
 When ruder deities mankind ador'd;
 Whose wrath to tame, a false inhuman crew
 Of frenzied priests their fellow-mortals slew.
 To Mayne attach'd, a stronger bolder band
 Prepar'd to place the sceptre in his hand;
 The power already his, he burns to gain
 Some public title to confirm his reign,
 The fond ambition of his soul to own
 The dangerous honours of the kingly throne.

But Potier, rising, a brief audience pray'd,⁴
 Whose eloquence unbending virtue made;
 Endow'd with manly firmness to repress
 The bursting people in each wild excess,
 And, boldly loyal to his ancient trust,
 By all respected tho' he dar'd be just.
 He speaks, their tumult ceasing at the sound,
 They pause to hear, turn, hasten and surround.
 Thus, when on Ocean's breast the storm is o'er,
 Ceas'd the rude winds and mute the seaman's roar,
 Lives but one sound, the strong ship dashing now
 With proud and prosperous course, the billows from her bow,
 Confusion silent at his voice remain'd,
 As thus the country's duty he explain'd.

"You seek," he cried, "another King to choose;
 I see your error, mourn it, and excuse.
 If mine the pow'r to raise him to the throne,
 So great his virtues it were his alone:
 But France has laws we cannot change, and Mayne
 The rank deserves not if he seek to reign."

Scarce had he spoke, when Mayne's approach was heard
 With pomp and splendour such as sov'reigns gird;
 With face unchang'd and courage unsubdued,
 Potier beheld him and his theme pursued:
 "For Mayne the honour and esteem I feel
 Bids me for France against himself appeal;
 Our aim is wicked and our title vain
 To choose a king—our Bourbons still remain;
 God near their throne advanc'd your noble race
 Not to usurp it but to guard and grace;
 Guise from the dead no more for vengeance cries,
 A monarch's blood his manés should suffice;
 In Valois' grave expire your angry hate,
 Bourbon is guiltless of your brother's fate;
 A crime reveng'd him as a crime destroy'd,
 Now be your cares to calm the storm employ'd;
 Virtues in both with equal lustre shine,
 O let your hearts in lasting union join.
 —But what these murmurs which appal my ear!
 Words of relapse and heresy I hear,
 I see your priests to bigot zeal a prey
 Rush sword in hand—mistaken madmen, stay!
 What fancied precedent, what new-found law
 From Heav'n's anointed can your homage draw?
 Does Henry seek, to ev'ry oath forsworn,
 To bound our freedom, or our creed to scorn?
 No, from our shrine he seeks a guiding light,
 Maintains the laws your rage and treason slight,
 Respects your worship, bears your faults, and knows
 To honour virtue even in his foes;
 He leaves to God the title you assume
 To judge the heart of man, to fix his doom;
 He comes to rule you with a father's care,
 And with true Christian love your errors spare.
 Who should be free alone remains a slave!
 And who obey his just dominion brave!

O how unlike your false and worthless crew,
 The elder Christian race who wisely knew
 Earthly with heav'nly duties to combine,
 To own the Pagan's rule yet bow not at his shrine,
 The threats of pow'r, the charms of wealth defied,
 And firm in faith without a murmur died.
 Such love and loyalty to death endures,
 They for their monarchs died, you murder yours;
 If what you preach of angry Heav'n be true,
 Fiercest its vengeance will descend on you."

Frowning he ceas'd, and struck with strong remorse
 None dar'd an answer to his bold discourse;
 In vain they strive to banish from their hearts
 That nameless dread which truth to guilt imparts;
 While shame and terror in each thought contend,
 Confus'd and sudden cries the silence rend;
 The shrill alarum sounds from ev'ry post,
 "To arms, O citizens, or all is lost."

As, from the caverns of the gloomy north,
 When bursts the pent storm in its fury forth,
 Columns of sand its dusky course betray,
 Usher'd by moaning winds, mark'd by the lightning's ray
 —So, where, arising o'er the darken'd field
 The eddying dust the light of day conceal'd,
 The clang of hostile arms, the clarion loud
 And doubling drum resounded from the cloud,
 Prophetic of death, which onwards roll'd
 And the dread march of Henry's army told
 Impatient for the fight from long repose,
 O'er the wide plain its threatening front which shows.

For useless sorrow o'er his kinsman's grave
 Short space the monarch's active wisdom gave,
 Nor stay'd to wreath his memory with the praise
 Which living pride to buried greatness pays.

In solemn mockery o'er the noble dead
 No storied marble rear'd its lofty head,
 Tricks by which wealth and sceptred folly hope
 O'er Fate to triumph and with Time to cope.
 Such arts the hero spurn'd and sought to send
 A tribute worthier his departed friend,
 His murder to revenge, his foes restrain,
 And o'er the peaceful land to fix his virtuous reign.

As on their ear the hostile clamours burst,
 In sudden fear the rebel chiefs dispers'd,
 Mayne to the wall in eager courage flew;
 The hurrying soldier to his standard drew;
 The ramparts bristle with a thousand foes
 That arm'd for fight the hero's path oppose.

Unlike the Paris of our milder times,
 Appear'd the city in that age of crimes,
 When, rais'd by fear or by ambition, round
 Its narrow space a hundred bastions frown'd;
 Where now, held open by the friendly hand
 Of smiling peace our splendid suburbs stand,
 Where spacious streets in equal lines extend,
 And, lost in air, our gilded domes ascend,
 A few mean huts in straggling order rose,
 Enclos'd by ramparts from marauding foes.
 East of the town the gallant monarch leads
 His ardent legions—death their march precedes;
 Aim'd by his host, or from the lofty walls
 Of fire and steel the ceaseless tempest falls;
 On either side, where'er the tir'd eye strays,
 One scene of slaughter meets its shrinking gaze:
 'Neath the hot rain the threat'ning ramparts yield,
 And broken masses spread the gory field.

Time was, when man first warr'd upon his kind,
 No subtle art the trade of blood refin'd;

Did hate, lust, avarice prompt him to engage,
 The sword was then sufficient to his rage.
 His cruel sons, industrious in ill,
 Robb'd Heav'n of fire, a swifter means to kill;
 Then first in air the booming shell was flung^s
 —Flanders! from thee the horrid present sprung—
 Pent in whose breast the deadly nitre lay,
 Heaving to the far mark its destin'd way,
 To the dull mass its flame the spent fuse lends,
 It bursts, and death on ev'ry side descends.

Next, dire refinement on the murderous trade,
 In deep dark caves the hidden fire was laid;
 Eager for slaughter, of his courage vain,
 The hardy soldier treads the faithless plain:
 A low prophetic sound his soul appals—
 Is it the thunder on his ear that falls—
 The rush of waves—of armed men the hum—
 An earthquake's voice at once that strikes him dumb—
 Why shakes the ground his clinging feet beneath?
 Too well, too late he knows—that sound is death.
 A sudden flash betrays the fatal snare,
 And storm and darkness wrap the startled air;
 Columns asunder by the shock are torn,
 Grav'd by the yawning earth, or thro' the black sky borne.
 Such are the paths to Gallia's throne that lead,
 And such the dangers Henry that impede:
 Like him the tempest's rage his soldiers spurn,
 Tho' thunders roll and lightnings o'er them burn;
 While Glory, at their monarch's side, they view,
 They see but her, and, where he leads, pursue.

With steady pace the while, and tranquil breast,
 Where thickest swell'd the combat, Mornay prest;
 Unmov'd alike by fury or by fear,
 The din of fight fell heedless on his ear;
 War he regards, with firm and stoic eye,
 A dire but useful scourge, sent from on high.

Now the bold legions, o'er a glaci's stain'd
 With blood, the dreadful covert-way have gain'd:
 New dangers here to added toils provoke,
 With beams, with earth, with slain the ditch they choke;
 Then over the heap'd dead with headlong course,
 To the dread breach their eager passage force:
 With reeking blade and buckler o'er him spread,
 Advanc'd the gallant Henry at their head;
 He mounts, and planted by his conquering hand
 Upon the walls his lili'd banners stand;
 Pause the pale Leaguers, fill'd with sudden fear,
 And seem their King and victor to revere.
 They yield—but Mayne their sinking soul excites,
 The example shows them, and to crime invites;
 Their close battalions press on ev'ry side
 The King, whose glance they trembled to abide.
 High on the rampart, crimson'd with the blood
 They shed around her, cruel Discord stood,
 And death, as nearer the opponents drew,
 With surer aim, at shorter distance, flew:
 Then ceas'd the thunder of the fight—no more
 Their deadly shower the bellowing cannons pour;
 A savage silence on their fury bred
 Its sullen horror o'er the combat spread;
 With ruthless arm and eye with rage that glows,
 Each cleaves his passage 'mid contending foes;
 Scene of the fiercest strife, by either host
 The bloody walls by turn are won or lost;
 And doubtful Victory still rears on high
 The banners of Lorraine where Henry's fly;
 At times triumphant and at times borne back,
 As shrunk or swell'd apace the stern attack;
 Thus the dark sea, when tempests o'er it roar,
 With restless billows laves or leaves the shore.

Ne'er did the King or his great foe display
 Talents so striking as on that dread day;

Both firm in courage as in mind serene,
 Amid the horrors of the bloody scene,
 Observe, dispose, command, perform, preside,
 And with a glance the varying movements guide.

First in the van, the hardy English fought,⁶
 By valiant Essex to the combat brought;
 Their wondering troops, so long the foes of France,
 Here first allied to serve our King's advance;
 On those same ramparts where the captive Seine
 Beheld of yore their gallant fathers reign,
 They come their country's honour'd name to spread,
 Proud at her call their dearest blood to shed.
 On the prone breach d'Aumale and Essex meet,
 Both ardent, young, with martial fire replete,
 Like fabled demigods in Ilium's fight;
 Round them in crowds their bleeding friends unite;
 France, England, and Lorraine in fury vie,
 Together press to combat and to die.

O thou, whose spirit rul'd the mortal fray,
 Soul of the fight, destroying Angel, say,
 Rebellion—Royalty—which side is thine,
 To whom does Heav'n's eternal scale incline?
 Bourbon and Mayne, d'Aumale and Essex long,
 Besiegers and besieg'd, amid the throng
 An equal carnage made: at length prevail'd
 The side of justice, and the tir'd League quail'd
 Beneath the thunder of great Henry's blows,
 His force no longer able to oppose.

As from a mountain, swell'd with wintry snow,
 Bursts the wild torrent on the plains below;
 The dams oppos'd its fury to restrain
 The shock impetuous for awhile sustain;
 But soon its force the feeble barrier tears,
 And death and ruin thro' the fissure bears,

Uproots the oak, the neighbouring forest's pride,
 That soar'd to Heav'n and ev'ry storm defied,
 Rends the vast fragment from its parent rock,
 And chases thro' the vale the flying flock.
 So from the summit of the smoking walls
 Upon his foes the ardent Bourbon falls;
 With thundering arm among the League he burst,
 Swept down their ranks, their guilty troops dispers'd
 O'erwhelm'd with fear, confounded and dismay'd,
 They broke, nor stood the vengeance of his blade.

Mayne saw their fall; his broken force to save
 The needful order for retreat he gave,
 And soon within its sheltering walls again
 The friendly town receives his breathless train.
 Check'd for awhile the furious victors stand
 Till kindling torches arm'd the ready hand;
 To lawless rage their valour quickly turns,
 Here plunder riots, there a palace burns.
 But Henry sees them not, his eager eye
 Devours the foemen that before him fly;
 Fir'd by his valour, with success elate,
 Boldly he presses on the closing gate:
 "On, my good comrades, on; while some provide
 The fire below, some scale with me the side
 Of these proud ramparts." Even as he spoke,
 From the dark bosom of a cloud there broke
 A radiant phantom, whose majestic frame
 Borne on the subject air descending came:
 Upon his brow immortal beauty beam'd,
 And from his eye God's living glory stream'd,
 Within his look a mingled feeling strove,
 Fear join'd with fondness and regret with love.
 "Restrain your rage, nor let the flames disgrace
 The ancient temples of my royal race;
 Seek'st thou, these ravages complete, to reign
 O'er desert fields a monarch of the slain?"

—Trembled the soldier at the awful sound
 That pierc'd his ear and humbly kist the ground;
 The spoil he quits; but Henry's ardent breast,
 Full of the fight, its anger scarce repress;
 Like Ocean's murmur when the storm has blown—
 "O fatal spirit of a world unknown
 What new command, what duty brings you here?"
 In gentlest tones the answer met his ear—
 "I am that sainted King whom France respects,
 Louis, whose heav'n-taught creed thy heart neglects,
 The friend, the father of thy royal line,
 Whose life was spent in strife and toil like thine,
 Who fill'd of yore the throne thou soon shalt fill,
 Who pities, who admires, and loves thee still;
 Less by thy valour than thy mercy won,
 Repentant Paris shall receive my son;
 This God instructs thee by my friendly voice,
 Do thou, my child, prove worthy of His choice."
 With tears of grateful joy and humble sighs,
 To these kind words the suppliant prince replies;
 Peace o'er his heart her gentle influence shed,
 A holy horror thro' his bosom spread;
 Thrice to embrace the sacred shade he bent,
 And thrice the vision baffled his intent;
 As airy clouds that on the welkin cast
 Change form and place with ev'ry changing blast.

Meanwhile those formidable walls along
 Chiefs, soldiers, citizens tumultuous throng;
 Death from on high a thousand weapons fling
 To bar the dreadful progress of their King.
 The virtue of the Highest round him guards,
 And from his head the fatal tempest wards.
 'Twas then that touch'd with gratitude and awe
 Heav'n's guardian care the pious monarch saw;
 With sad yet tranquil glance on Paris thrown,
 "Poor France," he cried, "and thou, deluded town,

Faithless and weak, save only to thy foes,
How long thy sov'reign wilt thou thus oppose?"

Then as, the source of light, the glorious sun,
Thro' Heav'n his daily course of splendour run,
More mild awhile on the horizon beams,
And greater to our eyes retiring seems;
So Henry from the guarded wall retires,
Full of the Deity his soul who fires,
To fair Vincennes, where, 'neath a branching oak,
His righteous laws of old good Louis spoke.
How alter'd now! no more of peace the seat,
A gloomy prison-house,⁷ a foul retreat,
In whose dark cells Despair has fix'd his throne,
Where Conscience draws from Guilt the ceaseless moan,
Her lonely watch where injur'd Virtue keeps,
Or where his lost pow'r maniac Greatness weeps;
Oppressors and opprest—the humble, great—
By turns the nation's idols or its hate.

Now in the western sky the fading light
To either host proclaim'd the reign of night,
Whose sable cloak from mortal view conceal'd
The strife and carnage of the dreadful field.

BOOK VII.

ARGUMENT.

Saint Louis transports Henry IV. in a vision to Heaven and to Hell, and shows him in the palace of the Fates his posterity and the great men whom France is destined to produce.

To soothe the evils of a life of woe,
 God's infinite tenderness has plac'd below
 Two angel beings, whose kind visits cheer
 The troubled period of our brief career:
 Sweet Sleep, the one, man's harass'd frame to bless,
 And Hope, our constant solace in distress:
 This, should tir'd Nature's energy decay
 Beneath the labours of the busy day,
 Restores the drooping strength, and gently throws
 Her welcome Lethe o'er our keenest woes;
 That stirs ambition, animates desire,
 And e'en deceiving pleasure can inspire;
 No guilty passion fills the favour'd breast
 Of him her heav'nly influence has blest,
 But o'er the wounded soul she sheds a balm,
 A tranquil happiness, a holy calm;
 From God on man those beams of promise shine,
 Like him eternal, stainless, and divine.

By Louis summon'd from their secret cells
 O'er Henry's couch they haste to breathe their spells.

Sleep hears the call, and bends his willing way
 With silent wing to where the hero lay:
 The tempests slumber in the cloudless skies,
 And dreams, the offspring of glad Hope, arise
 Around the prince, and o'er his weary bed
 Laurels and olive with their poppy shed.

His ancient diadem took Louis now,
 And, stooping, plac'd it on the sleeper's brow;
 Then smiling he exclaim'd, "O be it thine
 To reign the hope and glory of my line;
 Yet rest not satisfied with pow'r alone,
 Of all my gifts the poorest is the throne;
 Unblest, unhelpt by Heav'n, how vain a thing
 The victor's crown, the envied name of king!
 All worldly fame, its tenure is so slight,
 But ill can human excellence requite,
 A lightning glare which fascinates and flies,
 Which pain accompanies and death destroys:
 An empire far more durable and true
 Than earth can boast shall soon reward thy view,
 Follow but boldly, tho' untried the way,
 To lands invisible, where spirits sway."

He said, and mounting on a car of light
 Thro' the wide Heav'n directs their onward flight.
 Thus, thro' the parted air, from pole to pole
 The lightnings glance, the midnight thunders roll:
 And thus arose that fiery cloud on high¹
 Which veil'd Elijah from each human eye,
 Girt by whose flame, a heav'nly car of yore
 From wondering earth the gifted prophet bore.

High 'mid those orbs whose distance, course, and space,
 Man's grovelling mind in vain essays to trace,
 Kindled by God the sun in glory burns,
 And ceaseless round his flaming axis turns.

From him those streams of ceaseless lustre flow,
 Which primal life o'er sleeping matter throw,
 Which rule the day, dispense to ev'ry sphere
 That round him floats the season and the year.
 Those stars, obedient to a mutual law,
 Now shine divided, or together draw,
 Each for the other form'd, to aid and guide,
 Yield back the borrow'd light his beams provide.
 Beyond the limits of their vast career,
 Far in that space, where matter swims, appear
 Unnumber'd suns, worlds endless and unknown,
 Which heav'nly wisdom can direct alone.

In embryo there, those various passions rest,
 Which fill the world and fire the human breast;
 There, after death, our souls return again,
 Releas'd for ever from their fleshly chain.
 There sits the Almighty Judge, beneath whose feet
 The immortal spirits of mortal race must meet,
 The Lord of all, around, above, below,
 Whom different lands by different titles know;
 From Heav'n's high seat he hears our piteous cries,
 Regards our errors with forgiving eyes,
 Sees human ignorance in wisdom's pride
 Presume his works to judge, his motives to decide.

There Death, rude offspring of relentless Time,
 Conducts the souls of ev'ry age and clime;
 Profane disciples of Confucius' school
 There meet the bigot sons of Brahma's rule;
 A doubtful sect from Persia's shores succeed,
 Blind votaries of Zoroaster's creed;²
 Spirits from ev'ry land collect with these,
 Whence the rude winter binds the frozen seas,
 Or from Columbia's depths, where forests wide
 The savage errors of her children hide.
 The restless Dervise seeks in vain to find
 His prophet tutor by God's right enshrin'd,

And boasts the lone Fakír his deeds in vain
Of lifelong penitence and wilful pain.

Here first their danger seen, the dead await.
In trembling silence their eternal fate;
God at one glance decides the varying case,
His smiles absolve them or his frowns disgrace.
At humble distance from that unseen throne,
Whence God each instant made his judgments known,
Pronouncing ever his supreme decree
Whose aim vain mortals travail to foresee,
The monarch stood and commun'd with his breast,
"What doom by God on these will be exprest?
Will he the virtuous and the wise condemn
For blindness to the light he hid from them?
Will he unjustly on their faults decide,
By creeds whose knowledge he himself denied?
No! He who made us made us to be sav'd,
And Nature's law upon our hearts engrav'd,
Pure and unchangeable, like him, declares
God who made all to all extends his cares:
Be this the Pagan's saving hope and trust,
Heav'n will accept him if his life were just."

While thus to question God's mysterious plan,
The prince in reasoning vanity began,
Burst from the throne a stern voice on his ear,—
All Nature trembled the dread sound to hear.
Loud as the words which erst in thunder broke
On Sinai's mount when God to Israel spoke,
Silent the immortal choir, the stars stood still
To hear and circulate the Almighty will.

"Trust not, weak man, to reason's feeble aid;
God seeks not to be counsel'd but obey'd;
Hidden from sight he reigns the heart within,
Guilt he confounds but spares unconscious sin;

Severest justice wilful crime attends,
Mortal! receive the light his goodness lends."

As ceas'd the voice a rapid whirlwind bore
The awestruck monarch to a direr shore,
A shapeless space, parch'd, desolate, and wild,
Gloomy as Chaos ere Creation smil'd,
Where no bright suns, to pierce the dreary shade,
Their Maker's pow'r and providence display'd;
Hated by angels, horrible to earth,
No germ of being ever there has birth,
But Death with all his terrors in his train
Has there establish'd his eternal reign.
"What cries, O God! what groans of pain and fear,
Thro' streaming smoke what frightful flames appear,
What shapes of dread and death before me fleet,
What blazing caverns yawn beneath my feet."

"These be the shades," rejoin'd the Saint, "of Hell,
By justice fashion'd, where the guilty dwell;
Wide is the gate thereof and broad the way:
Enter, and ponder what its depths display."

With leering glance there gloomy Envy sate,
Withering all merit with her poisonous hate;
Day wounds her eyes that sparkle 'mid the gloom,
She loathes the living, loves the mouldering tomb.
Henry she saw, and, sighing, turn'd aside.
Near her, delighted with himself, was Pride;
Weakness, with pallid mien and downcast eyes,
Who yields to crime, loves virtue and destroys;
Disturb'd and restless, red Ambition stood
With thrones and tombs and slaves around him strew'd;
Hypocrisy, in wonted mildness drest,
Heav'n in her aspect, Hell within her breast;
False Zeal his savage rules triumphant shows;
And Interest last, whence every crime arose.

At sight of Henry, o'er that fiendish crew,
 Foes to his worth, a conscious terror grew;
 His soul from childhood nurst in virtue's school
 Of guilty passion ne'er obey'd the rule;
 Strange to their eyes his form their hearts dismay'd
 That boldly dar'd their gloomy realms invade.

As slow advancing thro' the dark profound
 Foul things of hideous shape their path surround;
 Starts on the hero's sight a dreadful form
 —“ 'Tis Valois' murderer, from the slaughter warm!
 Still grasps his gory hand the fatal knife,
 Which Treason aim'd against his monarch's life;
 While bigot priests adore him as divine,
 And place his statue by the sacred shrine,
 While Rome rewards, invokes her martyr's name,*
 How Hell disowns them in avenging flame!

“Hard tho' his fate,” the gifted Saint replied,
 “By judgments harsher still are monarchs tried;
 Punish'd for each excess of pow'r abus'd,
 What guilt committed or neglect excus'd;
 Ador'd in life pride sat upon their brow,
 The greatest then as they are humblest now;
 With death their transitory grandeur ends,
 Vanish'd their pomp, and mute the venal friends,
 Whose ready complaisance so aptly knew
 The truth to banish from their dazzled view;
 No more their art her dreaded form conceals,
 She points the punishment; the crime reveals;
 Her stranger accents thunder on the ear,
 Heroes on earth, but savage tyrants here,
 Pests of a desolate and groaning world,
 Crush'd 'neath the thunders their own madness hurl'd.
 Here too those soft and slothful monarchs groan,
 The puppet kings of a degraded throne;

Their haughty ministers beside them stand,
 Whose wicked rule impoverish'd the land,
 Corrupt in manners and in avarice bold,
 Who barter'd dignities and justice sold,
 The rank, the rights our virtuous fathers bore,
 Sham'd by a jester, show'r'd upon a whore.
 And ye, to luxury and indulgence bred,
 Whose useless days in silken pleasure fled,
 Whose friendship won no love, whose hate no fear,
 Weak but not wicked, what your sentence here?
 Ye too, of virtue and mankind the friends,
 Proclaim what fate your moral lives attends,
 Of doubt or frailty does one action blast
 Long years of wisdom and of goodness past?"

As bent the generous prince the words to hear,
 Rose in his eye the involuntary tear;
 "If such," he cried, "the doom, that all our race
 Must enter and endure this horrid place,
 If endless torments fleeting joys succeed,
 And cureless pains revenge one faulty deed,
 Why did our eyes e'er open on the light,
 Or why, when born, did cruel Heav'n unite
 Such penance with such passions, why instil
 The pow'r, the freedom to transgress its will?"

"Cease," said the Saint, "nor Providence arraign,
 Proportion'd to the crime is sent the pain;
 Deem not that God, the Maker of mankind,
 Delights to mar the work his hands design'd;
 Loth to revenge, as lavish to bestow,
 Of mercy prodigal, to anger slow,
 No savage tyrant, but a parent mild,
 E'en while he punishes he loves his child;
 Our faults and frailties weigh'd in equal scales,
 How oft his pity o'er his wrath prevails;

He weeps, forgives our weaknesses, nor knows
Brief joys to balance with eternal woe."

As thus he spoke, the pitying prince he guides
To the blest land where Innocence resides;
As mark'd his eye the beauteous scene, there stole
A secret pleasure thro' the hero's soul;
There the pure dawns of immortal light,
Contrasted with Hell's gloom, shone doubly bright;
No passion vex'd the heart, nor marring care
Disturb'd the reign of tranquil luxury there.
Love thro' the clime his sov'reign influence spread,
Not the gross flame on human weakness bred,
But that scarce spark, that holier rarer fire,
Whose heav'n-born purity mankind desire,
Which to the breast it dignifies bestows
Pleasures unmingled, languorless repose.

There dwelt the truly great and truly sage,
The virtuous kings of ev'ry clime and age;
Charlemagne and Clovis, o'er their native land
The watchful guardians there majestic stand;
There, side by side, forgot their rival heat,
The fiercest foes, like loving brothers, meet.
There the twelfth Louis,⁴ generous, wise, and good,
Among his fellow kings, a cedar, stood;
Born o'er our happier sires to rule the land,
His skill, his justice grac'd the high command;
The tear misfortune shed his bounty dried,
His mercy spar'd the weak, the poor supplied.
His faithful minister⁵ next meets the view,
Dear to his country, to his master true;
The dignity his patriot virtues gain'd
No guilt degraded, no oppression stain'd;
Just laws secur'd the good, the bad repress,
The monarch glorious and the people blest;

Days of immortal Memory! O when
Shall Time such scenes, such king restore again?

There too those chiefs, who, prodigal of blood,
Encounter'd danger for their country's good;
Clisson, Trémouille,⁶ Montmórency, de Foix,
Guesclin, who kings unmade or made, Dunois,
Bayard⁸ the good, and thou, illustrious Dame,⁹
Saviour of France, and England's endless shame.

"These," said the Saint, "we here exalted see,
Dazzled the world's weak gaze awhile like thee;
To them, as now to thee, was Virtue dear,
Her laws thro' life obey'd, her joys reward them here.
Their simple hearts lov'd truth, their church was mine,
O why, my son, dost thou forsake that shrine?"

As thus he spoke in melancholy tone
The palace of the Fates before them shone:
He guides the hero to the sacred dome
Whose brazen portals open as they come.

Thence Time on his eternal errand bound,
Rapid yet viewless wends his silent round,
With equal hands dispensing to mankind
The good or evil to their lots assign'd.
There, on a massy block of iron rear'd,
The mystic book of destiny appear'd,
Which, writ by God, the tale of life contains,
Our doubts, desires, our pleasures and our pains.
There Liberty, proud slave, imprison'd lies,
Restrained by secret yet resistless ties;
Her spirit tam'd but not extinct, the yoke
That Wisdom plac'd on her can ne'er be broke;
Her chain, so skilfully from sight conceal'd,
She knows it not, or, knowing, loves to yield;
The pow'r which binds herself she thinks she sways,
And has her humour most when she obeys.

"Hence," said the Saint, "that useful light descends
 Which heav'nly grace to human weakness lends,
 Hence, in some future day, its conquering dart
 Shall pass and penetrate thy kindling heart:
 To fix the period is with God alone,
 By him delay'd, reduc'd, determin'd, known;
 But ere that hour, that wish'd-for hour, appear,
 When God shall seat thee 'mid his chosen here,
 How many perils art thou doom'd to prove,
 Sham'd by what weakness, thro' what snares to move;
 May Heav'n accelerate the envious days
 Whose tardy lapse thy happiness delays!

Behold what eager crowds still entering press,
 And still departing never seem the less;
 These which by turns before us rise and pass,
 Like pictur'd forms in Fancy's magic glass,
 Are living images of future time,
 Gather'd from ev'ry age, produc'd in ev'ry clime.
 Since life began till Time shall end his flight,
 Each hour is present to the Almighty sight;
 His pow'r the moment of man's birth foresees,
 Disgrace to this, to that command decrees,
 Knows ev'ry change that waits each life he gave,
 Its virtue, vice, its fortune and its grave.

Approach, for gracious Heav'n permits to see
 The kings and heroes that shall spring from thee;
 Thy son appears,¹⁰ first of the goodly line—
 Proudlie our lily in his fame shall shine;
 O'er Spain to triumph, Belgium to o'errun,
 And yet not equal to his sire or son.

Two stately forms are seated near his throne,
 Beneath whose feet a fetter'd people groan;
 In Roman purple cloth'd, with pride elate,
 Soldiers and guards around them trembling wait;

Richelieu and Mazarin, immortal pair,
 That kingly pow'r without the title bear;
 Rais'd from the cloister to supreme command,
 The prince to counsel and to guard the land,
 By fortune favour'd and to empire train'd,
 Their prudence soon despotic pow'r obtain'd;
 This to misfortune wisely taught to bend,¹¹
 A subtle statesman and a dangerous friend;
 While that sublime, implacable of hate,
 With prosperous courage braves the storms of fate;
 Rivals of all that to command aspir'd,
 Both by the nation hated and admir'd;
 Foes to the country their oppression wrings,
 But by their talents precious to her Kings.
 Less great than them but a more useful mind,
 The best if not the brightest of mankind,
 Colbert¹² succeeds, beneath whose virtuous toils
 O'er the glad realm returning plenty smiles;
 Friend of the people whose mad hate oppress,
 His sole revenge to render them more blest;
 As erst, repaying blasphemy with bread,
 His murmuring children Israel's patriarch fed.

But see, to whom,¹³ in novel pomp array'd,
 This rare respect and humble homage paid?
 Before the splendours of whose kingly brow
 Do servile crowds in trembling silence bow?
 Inspir'd by glory greatness to pursue,
 More fear'd, obey'd, less lov'd perchance than you;
 Doom'd to experience each reverse of fate,
 Firm in distress, in conquest too elate;
 With leaguéd nations singly to contend,
 Admir'd in his long life, but greatest in his end.

Thrice fortunate age! which Nature's hand shall bless
 With ev'ry gift her boundless stores possess,

The sister arts restor'd by thee to France
 Shall fix posterity's admiring glance;
 Each slighted muse, no more to part, returns,
 With life the marble breathes, the canvas burns;
 From envy free the sons¹⁴ of learning join,
 Of Earth and Heav'n explore the grand design,
 The depths of universal nature sound,
 And shed the light of genial science round;
 Presumptuous error yields her leaden sway,
 And modest doubt to truth directs their way.

And Music, heav'nly maid, returns once more,
 That Greece and Italy refin'd of yore;
 On ev'ry side her witching notes I hear,
 The heart that govern thro' the captive ear.
 'Tis thine, O France, to conquer and record,
 To wake the lyre or wield the beamy sword,
 To thee the warriors', poets' praise belong,
 The victor's laurel with the bays of song.

A race of heroes in these climes shall rise—
 How each bold Bourbon to the combat flies;
 See Condé dart¹⁵ where most the battle burns,
 The prop and terror of the throne by turns;
 Less bright, more wise, Turenne next meets the view,
 His generous rival and his equal too;
 Mark and admire in Catinat's¹⁶ rare mind,
 The soldier's skill, the sage's virtue join'd;
 Safe where his guarding walls around him rise,
 Vauban¹⁷ the anger of his foes defies;
 In war unconquer'd tho' at court despis'd
 View England's pride by Luxemburg¹⁸ chastis'd;
 And thou, pale Germany, abash'd shalt see
 From Villars¹⁹ arms thy baffled eagle flee;
 Judge of the peace his victories shall bring,
 Fit rival of Eugène, meet shield of Gallia's King.

But who that youth²⁰ upon whose graceful mien
 Mildness with majesty is mingling seen?
 With careless eye he marks the dangerous throne
 Whose envied pomp for him but vainly shone:
 Death takes his silent but remorseless flight,
 —A sudden cloud involves him from my sight.
 Alas! for France, who fondly hop'd to see
 Her laws, her liberties matur'd by thee;
 So fair yet frail why was the flow'ret given?
 Or why, bestow'd, so soon reclaim'd by Heaven?
 That active soul, to deeds of virtue bred,
 Had o'er the realm a bright example spread,
 Plenty and Peace had journey'd hand in hand,
 And Happiness reviv'd the drooping land.
 This is no common blow—one general doom
 Sweeps sire and son, wife, husband to the tomb;
 How mourn'd in death their country's tears may tell,
 As her glad homage prov'd in life she lov'd them well!

One tender scion²¹ from the ruin springs,
 Poor precious remnant of a race of kings;
 The fruitful tree is fallen, trunk and bough—
 The Gallic crown nods o'er a baby brow;
 Sole hope, whose very frailty makes it dear,
 Do thou his infancy, wise Fleury, rear,
 Conduct his steps, his weaknesses sustain,
 His errors check, his rising virtues train;
 Teach him that fittest lesson for the throne,
 To know the country's greatness as his own,
 To place his interest in the public weal,
 Though born a monarch as a man to feel:
 With him, O France, resume thy pristine might,
 Shake off the gloom which shrouded thy full light:
 Let Art, her farewell which already plann'd,
 Return to crown thee with her utile hand.
 Old Ocean murmurs from his hollow caves
 Where now thy stately fleets that stemm'd his waves;

The call by thee obey'd, how Commerce pours
 Her golden tribute from remotest shores!
 No more the dread of earth, to thee shall turn
 Her warring potentates their fate to learn,
 Thine the proud duty to bid battle cease,
 Enough thy glory to be blest with peace.

Next to that youthful King a chief we view,²²
 Whom calumny and hatred long pursue:
 Call'd by his birth the highest posts to fill,
 His rank is yet scarce equal to his skill.
 His rare resources prosperous years declare;
 The Arts revive beneath his watchful care.
 Facile not feeble, of impulsive mind
 Whose fire and genius prudence scarce confin'd;
 Too fond of pleasure, ever on the wing,
 To plan a frolic or to shake a king,
 Yet 'e'en 'mid luxury the surest guide
 To guard his country and her foes divide.
 Chief, soldier, subject, master, all in one,
 No king, but worthy of the proudest throne.

As slowly past the vision'd hero by,
 An angry tempest hurtled in the sky,
 Yet all uninjur'd thro' its clouds appear'd
 High over head the Gallic standard rear'd:
 Spain seem'd to France her generous aid to lend,
 And Austria's pride beneath their league to bend:
 "In ev'ry change of life 'mid good or ill
 Let us admire Almighty wisdom still.
 The race which erst Iberia's sceptre bore,
 Proud progeny of mighty Charles, is o'er;
 She asks a king from us, nor asks in vain,
 A Bourbon rules o'er lately hostile Spain."
 —As spoke the Saint, thro' Henry's kindling soul
 A sweet surprise, a sudden transport stole—

Louis resum'd—"Your eager joy suspend,
 The seeming gain in real grief may end;
 From rival France Madrid receives her king,
 An honour which to both may danger bring;
 Mistrust and jealousy shall soon arise,
 And mar the promise of our budding joys;
 How long,²³ my sons, by foolish counsels led,
 Shall discord's influence o'er your kingdoms spread?"

He ceas'd: and fading from the hero's sight,
 With him the vision vanish'd into night.
 Instant the sombre palace of the Fates
 Swung back with harsh recoil its ponderous gates.

Meanwhile arose the gently blushing day,
 And thro' the East took up her glorious way.
 Reluctant night withdrew her sable veil,
 And in her train the dreams and visions sail.
 The prince awoke, and found within his breast
 New confidence and strength divine imprest;
 His looks an awe and reverence inspire,
 And o'er his aspect beams a heav'nly fire;
 Thus when of old on Sinai's sacred hill
 Moses consulted the Almighty will,
 The trembling Hebrews bow'd their heads in dust,
 Nor dar'd the glory of his keen glance trust.

BOOK VIII.

ARGUMENT.

Count Egmont arrives, on the part of the King of Spain, to the assistance of Mayenne and the Leaguers. The Battle of Ivry: the defeat of Mayenne and the death of Egmont. The valour and clemency of Henry the Great.

THE haughty spirit which so late inflam'd
The States to treason by defeat was tam'd;
At Henry's awful name, inspir'd with fear,
To choose a sov'reign they no more appear;
Nought their unsettled passions can accord,
Mayne to abandon or confess him lord,
While their base dictates thro' a rebel land
Second his aim and strengthen his command.

This crownless King,¹ this subject who disdain'd
A chief to own, still with the League retain'd
Superior pow'r; obedient to his call,
Crowds flock'd around to combat and to fall.
Full of new hope, he to the council draws
Those haughty chiefs, avengers of his cause,
The great Lorraine, Joyeuse, and bold Brissac,²
Nemours, Saint-Paul, la Châtre, Canillac:
Gathering they come: and struggling o'er each face
Vengeance and rage, despair, and pride we trace:
Some weakly on with trembling footsteps tread,
Thro' loss of blood in lives of battle shed;
That blood, those battles, and each biting scar
Again inspire them to revenge and war;

Hate in each breast, a sword in ev'ry hand,
 In grim array around their chief they stand.
 Thus, on Olympus erst, with impious pride
 Earth's giant race the pow'r of Jove defied,
 Heap'd rock on rock, and menac'd still the skies,
 Drunk with mad hope the Immortal to chastise.

Discord to these, emerging from a cloud,
 Pois'd on a car of light her aspect show'd:
 "Courage," she said, "the wish'd-for aid is near,
 Gallia must conquer or must perish here."
 Swift rose Aumale, and soon his joyful cry
 As met the lengthening ranks his eager eye
 Confirm'd the news. "'Tis, 'tis the promis'd aid,
 So oft demanded and so long delay'd!
 At last kind Austria succours leaguer'd France;
 Rise, Mayne, and mark our gallant friends advance."
 Now seen, now lost, amid those groves rever'd
 Where sleep our kings the goodly host appear'd;
 Of glittering arms a formidable line,
 Proud steeds that prance and helms that brightly shine;
 Before their march the mob with rapture prest,
 Gaz'd on the squadrons, and their leader blest.
 Egmont the young,³ renown'd for martial fire,
 Ambitious son of an unhappy sire
 —Where Brussels rears her lofty walls to view,
 The breath of life the tender infant drew;
 By blind affection to his country led,
 His gallant father on the scaffold bled,
 In a vain struggle tyranny to end,
 Her laws to build, her liberties defend;
 The son, in combats rash, in courts a slave,
 Blindly and basely to his murderers gave
 A venal aid, and, reckless of her woes,
 Opprest his country and obey'd her foes—
 By Philip sent to the fair banks of Seine,
 A saving angel to despairing Mayne,

Who fondly deem'd the long-sought moment near
 Terror and carnage in his turn to bear;
 Thine heart too swell'd, great Henry, to survey
 Their martial confidence and proud array,
 And pray'd that Heav'n would speed the glorious hour
 To fix the balance of contested pow'r.

In mingled stream where Eure with Iton⁴ bends,
 By Nature blest a fruitful vale extends,
 Over whose beauteous breast relentless War
 Ne'er yet had roll'd his desolating car;
 There, while around him civil discord spread,
 His peaceful life the happy rustic led,
 In Heav'n and in his humbleness secure,
 No wealth to lose, nor luxury to allure,
 Safe in his lowly cottage from alarms,
 Sweetly he slept, nor heard the din of arms;
 So long yet vainly spar'd, at length, e'en here
 Their spreading camps the hostile armies rear;
 Eure's waves in sudden terror backward roll'd;
 The trembling shepherd left the bleating fold,
 And to the lonely forests, fill'd with dread,
 With his sad wife and weeping children fled.

Such war's stern doom! yet deem not from your King,
 Unhappy peasants, that your miseries spring,
 He pities, loves you, and would end your woes;
 This day to combat in your cause he goes,
 That peace once more the harass'd land may bless,
 And lasting joys remove your brief distress.
 From rank to rank he guides his fiery steed;
 Proud of his load, and matchless in his speed,
 With frequent hoof the firmset earth he spurns,
 Invites the danger, for the battle burns.

Comrades in glory, with his laurels crown'd,
 His warlike nobles their bold chief surround;

D'Aumont⁶ the brave, Biron,⁶ whose very name
 Spread fear thro' all, long-link'd with deeds of fame;
 Impetuous, young, and ardent, near him stood
 His son, who since⁷—but then he too was good;
 Sully,⁸ Nangis, Crillon, to sin severe,
 Whom the League hate, yet, hating them, revere:
 Turenne,⁹ who since acquired a nobler pow'r,
 Won a fair princess' hand and regal dow'r,
 Ill fated honours and not long enjoy'd!
 Briefly as gain'd, by Richelieu's hate destroy'd;
 With brightest lustre 'mid the crowd appears
 The gallant Essex—like a palm that rears
 Its lofty head upon a foreign plain,
 And seems fresh beauty from the change to gain—
 A burnish'd helmet on his brow of pride,
 Where gems and gold in starry lustre vied,
 Gifts dear and precious, from his Queen obtain'd,
 Deserv'd by courage, by affection gain'd;
 In you at once, ambitious Essex, blend
 Eliza's love and Henry's firmest friend.
 At humbler distance stand Lesdiguières,¹⁰
 Clermont, de Neale, d'Angenne, and Feuquières,
 Trémouille the bold, d'Ailly the young, to whom
 That day of battle was a day of doom;
 Rang'd round their King, they wait his word, and trace
 Sure signs of triumph in that manly face.

Not such was Mayne; vainly his heart essay'd
 To call its wonted firmness to his aid;
 Whether that, conscious of the guilty side,
 He dreamt of victory to his arms denied,
 Or that mysterious Heav'n bestows to some
 A certain presage of events to come,
 Not ours to know—for, masterless in wile,
 His care he hides beneath a cheerful smile,
 Each bosom animates with warmer zeal,
 And yields the hope himself has ceas'd to feel.

Full of that pride, in youth which rashness breeds,
 But, link'd to practis'd age, to fame that leads,
 Fierce Egmont by him stood, and mark'd with grief
 The doubts and slowness of his wavering chief.

As from the bosom of a smiling vale,
 When swells the stirring trumpet on the gale,
 Restless, unbroke, and from his shackles freed,
 In conscious beauty bounds the noble steed;
 Lifts his proud neck, impatient of the rein,
 And to the light winds gives his floating mane;
 Such Egmont, as a martial fury beam'd
 From his bright eyes and o'er his aspect gleam'd;
 His soul he soothes with hopes of glory near,
 And deems that victory shall crown him here,
 But little dreaming that his fatal pride
 Digs him an early grave by Iton's bloody side!

Now 'tween the hosts the royal Henry prest,
 And, pointing to the League, his troops address:
 "Frenchmen¹¹ and friends, behold our long-wish'd foe—
 Your monarch leads you—On, and strike the blow—
 Lose not amid the tempest of the war
 My snowy plume—be it your rallying star—
 Follow ye where it floats, for there renown
 Our glorious struggles shall the quickest crown."

He ceas'd, and eager for the fight delay'd
 His squadrons march'd invoking Heav'n for aid:
 Around their chiefs the hardy soldiers fly
 From either force, and gather at their cry.
 E'en such the shock, by Calpe's craggy shore,
 Thro' the close straits when wintry tempests pour,
 Beneath their fury either Ocean raves,
 And to the dark sky lifts his foaming waves,
 Earth moans afar, Heav'n growls, the night appears,
 And trembling the swarth Moor the world's destruction fears.

To the hot musket join'd the reeking blade
 On ev'ry side a double ruin made;
 That fatal weapon which, with hellish joy,¹³
 The fiend of war invented to destroy,
 Which dealt the blow or aim'd the deadly fire,
 The fit creation of a demon's ire.
 They blend, they combat—courage, skill, despair,
 Tumult, and blinded rage, and fear are there—
 The shame of flight—of blood the burning thirst—
 The arm that reckless smote, the lip that dying curst.
 A parent here his flying child pursued,
 A brother's blood a brother's blade imbued,
 Pale Nature shudder'd, and the frightened shore,
 Slowly and sad, drank in their hapless gore.

Amid a forest of encircling lances
 O'er broken arms and scatter'd slain advances
 The gallant King—before him, like the tide
 At Moses' rod, the warring bands divide.
 Great Mornay¹³ follows him with moveless mien,
 In mind as quiet as in brow serene,
 Still like a guardian genius hovering round.
 —Thus Fiction tells, of yore, on Trojan ground,
 How Gods descending from their native skies
 Shar'd mortal combats in a mortal guise;
 Or like the ministers of Heav'n's dread ire,
 Who walk the clouds, direct the lightning's fire,
 Enchain the tempest, or the thunders wake,
 The troubled universe with fear to shake—
 So to the distant legions Mornay bears
 The rapid orders that his King declares,
 Those fearless mandates of a noble soul,
 Which change the fight and destiny control:
 Obey'd as soon as heard, the eager bands
 Restrain their fury at his known commands,
 Now they disperse, now rally, march, unite,
 One master-mind presiding o'er the fight:

Mornay, all present, his dear master guards,
 Oft from his head the blow descending wards,
 Yet never stains his stoic hands in gore,
 Which his just breast forbids his blade to pour;
 His virtue zealous in the monarch's cause
 For him alone the sword of battle draws,
 While his rare courage, still to war a foe,
 Knew to brave death yet shrink to deal the blow.

Untam'd, untir'd, Turenne now swept the field,
 And forc'd Nemours' vain cavalry to yield;
 Yet fled not all, for, proud of honest scars,
 Eloquent witnesses of former wars,
 Old Ailly, still the model and the dread
 Of younger warriors, death around him spread,
 D'Ailly, who, 'mid the general horror, shook
 His years from off him and new vigour took:
 One only blade withstands him in the strife,
 A blooming hero in the flow'r of life,
 Who, on that bloody and illustrious day,
 First brav'd the dangers of the mortal fray.
 Scarce of glad Hymen known the tender charms,
 Favourite of all the Loves, he left their arms:
 As yet unknown save as a hopeful boy,
 Greedy of fame he spurn'd the cup of joy.
 That morn his gentle bride with tearful eyes,
 And sorrowing aspect that accus'd the skies,
 Arm'd her young love, and his dear breast around
 With trembling hand the weighty cuirass bound,
 On his proud front the costly helmet tied,
 Weeping the while that face so fair to hide.

'Mid smoke and dust and flame, in mutual rage,
 On rush the eager warriors to engage;
 O'er friend and foe, the dying and the dead
 With reckless pace their fiery coursers tread,
 Till, forth from the hot ranks, a space they gain,
 Where less the tumult shakes the gory plain;

Bleeding, all cas'd in steel, with pointed lance,
 To the dread charge the mortal foes advance;
 Earth groan'd beneath the shock; in splinters riven
 Their weapons fly—thus, thro' the sultry heaven
 Two lowering clouds which death and darkness bear,
 Together meet and dash themselves in air;
 From the dire conflict are the thunders hurl'd
 And lightnings darted o'er the trembling world.

Now, leaping from their steeds, in mutual hate,
 With closer arms they dare a surer fate.
 Red War and Discord to the combat hied,
 And Death came stern and spectral at their side.
 O hapless warriors! too impetuous foes!
 Suspend the dreadful fury of your blows
 —It must not be, for cruel Fate demands
 Such noble victim from such noble hands;
 And, each to each unknown, with dauntless might,
 Their clashing sabres close in mortal fight:
 The flashing edge descends; red streams proclaim
 Of gratified revenge the cunning aim,
 And all unable to resist the stroke,
 Their sheathing mail in many a splinter broke:
 Buckler and helmet now alone oppose
 The course of death and ward the frequent blows;
 Grimly they smile thro' blood, each bends his eye
 One sign of weakness in his foe to spy;
 Each pleas'd yet each astonish'd to behold
 His rival's courage and demeanour bold.
 At length the veteran with a fatal blow
 Struck to the ground his young and gallant foe;
 His batter'd helmet rolling on the field
 Disclos'd his eyes in death for ever seal'd.
 The victor gaz'd—O horror! O despair!
 'Tis—'tis his son, pale, bleeding, butcher'd there.
 With rage and guilt the hapless sire oppress
 Turn'd the still reeking weapon to his breast;

Foiled in his wish, for watchful friends stood round,
 He fled in horror from the hated ground;
 His fatal victory preying on his mind,
 City, court, camp for ever he resign'd;
 Fled from the world, and in far deserts tried
 From mortal view his stinging crime to hide:
 There ever as the sun at morn returns,
 Or when at eve with milder light he burns,
 His son's dear name is heard the woods among,
 And echoing rocks the mournful sound prolong.

But whose the white-rob'd form, that 'mid the gloom
 And smoke of war, like spectre of the tomb,
 Steals dimly on? His young and tender wife,
 Uncertain, trembling, treads the scene of strife;
 With shuddering eye she scann'd the fatal plain,
 In mangled heaps where slept the careless slain:
 She seeks, she sees him; gaspingly she falls,
 With wild despair upon his dear name calls
 In feeble accents, which, unform'd and low,
 Told death was near to close the scene of woe.
 In one long kiss her lips to his she prest,
 Cold now, so lately whose caresses blest,
 Clasp'd to his still and senseless corpse she sigh'd,
 One last look gave, one wild embrace—and died.

Ill-fated victims! husband, wife and sire!
 Sad stern examples of war's guilty ire!
 O may the memory of that dreadful fight
 The tears and pity of our sons excite,
 That the dire story of their fathers' crimes
 May prove a beacon to remotest times.

—But say, who thus compels the League to yield,
 Hero or God, who drives them from the field?
 Biron, whose vigorous arm and sweeping blade
 Thro' thick battalions a red path has made.

D'Aumale arrests their flight with angry cry,—
 Turn, cowards, turn—O whither do you fly?
 Are you the soldiers of Mayenne and Guise,
 On whom for vengeance Rome and Paris cries?
 Up to the fight once more, and boldly cope,
 D'Aumale commands you, in that name be hope.”
 Then, aiding him, Beauveau, and brave Fosseuse,
 The fierce Saint-Paul and petulant Joyeuse,
 With hopes renew'd their scatter'd bands unite,
 And in fresh courage lead them to the fight:
 Fortune with rapid pace returns; in vain
 Biron attempts the struggle to sustain,
 And check the reflux of that fiery tide:
 Here Parabère falls wounded at his side;
 The good Feuquières a gory couch has found;
 D'Angenne, Neale, Clermont bite the dusty ground;
 Bleeding, and weak, and pierc'd with numerous blows,
 Young Biron, here thy glorious life should close;
 A death so noble and so crown'd with fame,
 To latest worlds would hand thy storied name,
 Did not thy friend, thy generous monarch see
 His hero's danger and press on to free.
 —Not his the heart, which deems in senseless pride
 Enough the honour to attend his side,
 And coldly thinks a subject's blood and blade
 By one imperial look too well repay'd,
 But warm with friendship, that best boon of Heaven,
 Delight of noble souls, in mercy given,
 Friendship whose charms a purer joy bestow
 Than royal ingrates e'er are blest to know—
 He hastes to aid, the noble fire which guides,
 His foot with speed, his frame with strength provides;
 Sav'd from destruction, to new life restored,¹⁴
 Biron, be faithful to thy gallant lord,
 Be thine the loyal heart to guard his right,
 As his the fearless arm to save thee in the fight!

Now breath'd a horrid tumult o'er the plain,
 And cruel Discord swell'd the furious strain;
 To Bourbon's valour she oppos'd her fires,
 And with new rage the troubled League inspires;
 Their van she leads, and, with her hellish breath,
 Sounds, far and near, the tocsin trump of death.
 Swift as an arrow thro' the parted sky,
 Rush'd bold Aumale attracted by her cry.
 Henry alone he sought; with clamour loud
 Close at his heels the infuriate Leaguers crowd.
 As, amid forest depths, with headlong speed
 The hardy bloodhounds to the combat lead,
 Fierce slaves of man, that, born to carnage, press
 The baffled sanglier to his last recess,
 While, ever and anon, the cheering horn
 Swells on the breeze by mountain echoes borne,
 Whose loud long note their speed and rage excites,
 And the slow hunter to the death invites.
 Hemm'd in, o'erpow'r'd, alone, a host of foes,
 Eager for vengeance, thus round Henry close.
 His guardian angel in that terrible hour
 Supplied his arm with a resistless pow'r,
 Like a tall rock he stood the sky which braves,
 Breaks the rude winds, and spurns on high the waves.
 Who then can tell the carnage and the blood
 That heap'd Eure's banks and stain'd his crystal flood;
 O bleeding shade of Gallia's bravest King,
 Illume my mind and aid me while I sing!

Around their King his faithful nobles fly,
 For them he fights, for him they gladly die,
 Terror before him, ruin in his rear,
 Till furious Egmont check'd his fierce career.
 Long had the stranger, of his courage vain,
 In search of Henry rang'd the bloody plain;
 His rashness hurls him to an early grave,
 Renown inspires, ambition makes him brave:

"Come, Bourbon, come, with me the fight essay,
 'Tis ours to fix the fortune of the day."
 Scarce had he spoke, an omen from on high,
 Flash'd the red lightning thro' the sombre sky,
 The distant thunders growl'd, and shook the ground;
 The bands shrunk back in terror at the sound;
 But Egmont from the sight an omen draws,
 That Heav'n fights with him and assists his cause,
 That Nature, heedful of her favourite's fame,
 Those thunders sent his victory to proclaim.
 O how he triumph'd, when the gushing tide
 Of royal blood o'erflow'd his rival's side;¹⁸
 Unmov'd and fearless, Henry met the blow,
 His courage rising as his dangers grow;
 Proudly his great heart throb'd with stern delight
 To find a rival in fair Honour's fight,
 Till by his wound to nobler efforts stung
 Headlong on his bold foe the monarch sprung,
 Bore down his idle guard, then forward prest
 And plung'd the shining weapon in his breast.
 O'er him with red hoof the hot charger past,
 Till death drew nigh and clos'd his eyes at last,
 To realms of night his soul indignant fled,
 And join'd the spirit of his father dead.

Presumptuous Spain, of late so fierce and proud!
 His fall thy warlike confidence has 'cow'd;
 Beneath reverse thy boastful children here
 First felt the influence of defeat and fear.
 Tumult and terror in the army reign,
 And the loud panic grows along the plain:
 The soldiers broken, and the chiefs dismay'd—
 No voice directed and no hand obey'd—
 Their banners left or lost, they yield—they fly
 In eager haste with many a fearful cry:
 Some unresisting to their victor kneel,
 Entreat his mercy or demand his steel;

Some in their hurry to escape the foe
 By early flight awhile delay the blow,
 To Eure's deep stream in fear distracted run,
 And meet the death they fondly sought to shun;
 The thronging dead impede the river's course,
 And the stream check'd rolls backward to its source.

Incapable of fear, tho' griev'd, serene,
 Lord of himself, Mayne mark'd the bloody scene;
 Sore smitten 'neath the blows of cruel Fate
 Yet hopes he triumph o'er her angry hate.
 Not thus Aumale, with shame and rage inflam'd,
 Heav'n he reproach'd and partial fortune blam'd.
 "All, all is lost," he cried, "less hard to me
 Death than dishonour, here to fall than flee;
 Such too thy choice will prove, illustrious Mayne."
 —"Cease," said his chief, "this weak despair restrain;
 Still of our cause the honour and the guide,
 Live to repair our loss and curb their pride;
 All is not lost; hope, freedom yet are ours;
 Rally the remnant of our scatter'd pow'rs;
 Follow to Paris; there our deeds shall speak
 The tameless courage no defeat can break."
 With ill-dissembled wrath and sullen grief
 He hears the hated orders of his chief.
 Thus, from his fierceness, to another's will,
 The lion humbled by man's conquering skill,
 Obedient crouches to the *one* known hand,
 Dreadful to others, but at his command
 Following with stifled fury that appears
 To threaten e'en the master whom he fears.

The fight was o'er, when, anxious for the fame
 Which future times should give their Henry's name,
 Swiftly descending from the vaulted sky,
 The parted spirits of his race stood by;
 The sainted Louis at the hero's side
 His varied feelings in that moment eyed,

And saw that, worthy of renown, he knew
To use success and spare the conquer'd too.

Still warm with anger, greedy yet of blood,
His sullen soldiery their captives view'd,
Who, tremblingly, in breathless silence wait
The dreaded sentence that shall fix their fate;
While, in each wandering glance, despair and shame
And guilty fear their misery proclaim:
But Henry turn'd to them with gracious look
Which mingled clemency and courage spoke:
"Be free," he cried, "this hour unties your chain,
Live as my subjects or my foes remain;
One master recognise in Mayne, or me,
As he or I best merit so to be;
Slaves of the League, or free around my throne,
With me to triumph, or 'neath her to groan."
At these glad sounds of life and freedom cheer'd,
No more the vengeance of their King they fear'd,
But gladly to his lenient empire bow'd,
Blest in defeat and of their fetters proud:
Their eyes are open'd and their hate disarm'd,
His valour conquer'd and his virtue charm'd;
Rang'd 'neath his flag, exulting in the name
Of Henry's soldiers they atone their shame;
While their great victor bids the carnage stand,
And checks the courage of his warrior band;
No more that lion, smear'd with human gore,
Which death and terror thro' each bosom bore,
But a kind God, with mercy in his eye,
Who binds the storm and lays his thunders by;
For peace with gentle touch has soften'd now
The gory terrors of his threatening brow,
And they who deem'd existence but a word,
Taste all the joys of life and hope restor'd,
While, like a father, he extends his care
To all their wants and listens ev'ry pray'r.

That ready messenger of truth and lies,
 Rumour, whose light tale gathers as she flies,
 Swifter than time whose empty stories roll,
 Filling the universe from pole to pole,
 While fram'd at once to hear, see, speak, she sings
 The worth of heroes or the shame of kings;
 Doubt, Curiosity around her form
 With Hope, Credulity, and Terror swarm,
 And her bright busy tales, assisting Fame
 To France great Henry's victory proclaim:
 From Po to Tagus was his triumph known,
 And Rome's proud pontiff trembled on his throne;
 While the loud voice the north exulting hears,
 Pale Spain the tidings learnt with sorrow, shame and fears.

O faithless League! O Paris! sad retreat
 Of cheated citizens and priests who cheat,
 Then thro' your streets wild cries of anguish rung,
 O'er each pale brow Despair his ashes flung,
 Till Mayne, your drooping spirits to inflame,
 Conquer'd but full of hope to Paris came.
 By false reports awhile his deep intrigue
 E'en in defeat deceives the doubtful League,
 Confirms their hatred to his victor foe,
 And seeks by hiding to repair the blow.
 But cruel Truth, despite his utmost care,
 Mars the fond scheme and lays the falsehood bare,
 Strips the fair hues, betrays the statesman's art,
 Breathes from each mouth and freezes ev'ry heart.

But Discord now, enrag'd to madness, cried,
 "Think not that thus my work shall be destroy'd,
 Have I, for this, thro' groaning cities spread
 So many flames and such dire poisons shed,
 Confirm'd my pow'r by streams of blood to see
 Bourbon, in state enthron'd, triumphant, free;

Great as he is and dreadful in the field,
Who force defies to gentler foes may yield;
In vain our hopes to drive him from the throne,
No victor but himself will Henry own;
His peril from within, 'tis only thro'
His heart I can oppose him and subdue."

She ceased, and, sudden, on a car of blood,
By Hatred drawn, her course from Seine pursued,
And circled by thick clouds that hid the day,
Bent to all conquering Love her rapid way.

BOOK IX.

ARGUMENT.

Description of the temple of Love. Discord implores his influence to subdue the courage of Henry IV. The hero is detained for some time with *Madame d'Estée*, celebrated under the name of the fair *Gabrielle*. Mornay tears him away from his love. The King returns to his army.

WHERE ancient Idaly's glad isle ascends,
 With Asia's fertile shores where Europe blends,
 Stands an old palace by rude time rever'd,¹
 Whose first foundations favouring Nature rear'd,
 But Art its simple architecture grac'd
 With ornaments surpassing Nature's taste.
 There Flora strews her glowing offspring round,
 Pomona's bounty ripens o'er the ground;
 In smiling plenty o'er those happy plains,
 With myrtle cloth'd, eternal summer reigns;
 Turn'd by no plough the earth spontaneous yields
 Perennial harvests from neglected fields.
 And there too man each varied gift surveys
 Of bounteous Nature in her earliest days,
 All she then granted with benevolent hand,
 Eternal quiet and existence bland,
 The joy, the ease in fortunate Eden known,
 To him were given save Innocence alone.

There Music pour'd her soft notes on the breeze,
 And melting harmony inspir'd sweet ease;

The lover's lute, the yielding maiden's lay,
 At once their passions and their shame betray;
 Each day their brows with glowing garlands wreath'd
 To Love's young God their ardent pray'rs they breath'd,
 Eager from him to learn the dangerous art
 To please, seduce and captivate the heart;
 While flattering Hope, with brow serene and bland,
 Led to his temple each adoring band,
 The light-rob'd Graces by the sacred shrine
 With the free dance their siren voices join,
 And Luxury a downy couch along
 Pleas'd saw their sports and heard their tuneful song.
 And lo! in silence by her side where lie
 Th' enchanting smile, soft care and conscious sigh,
 The amorous pleasure and the warm desire
 To sweeter tumults which the spirit fire.

Such the fair entrance of the holy fane—
 But, knowledge of its inner scenes to gain,
 If with bold footstep in its depths you pry,
 What horrid sights then rush upon the eye!
 No more glad Pleasure's lovely troop appear,
 No more sweet Music greets the raptur'd ear,
 Grief, Discontent, Disgust, Imprudence, Dread,
 O'er the chang'd scene their chilling influence spread;
 There gloomy Jealousy with aspect pale
 Follows with trembling foot Suspicion's tale,
 Before her path, with deadly venom stored
 Hatred and Rage rear high the vengeful sword,
 Malice regards the murderous group awhile,
 And lauds their labours with a devilish smile,
 Repentance last with downcast tearful eyes
 Mourns o'er their fury with a thousand sighs.

Deep in the bosom of that dread retreat
 Young Love has fix'd his everlasting seat;
 Liberal alike of pleasure and of pain,
 O'er ev'ry heart extends his treacherous reign;

His feeble hand controls the fate of earth,
 To peace or war his courted smile gives birth;
 While proudest kings his mighty influence own,
 He, dangerous infant, from his dazzling throne,
 Less pleas'd to bless than watchful to annoy,
 Regards his victims with a savage joy.

Here Discord sudden burst, by anger led,
 And from her frown the timid pleasures fled;
 Her blazing torch she madly shook on high,
 Blood on her brow and fury in her eye:
 "Brother," she cried, "where now thy dreaded darts,
 Thy matchless arrows that subdued all hearts?
 O! if for thee my wiles e'er vext mankind,
 My deadly venom with thy rage combin'd,
 Now from the arms of shameful sloth arise,
 My cause avenge, my enemies chastise:
 My plans are thwarted by a conquering foe,
 Whose glorious laurels round the olive grow,
 And gentle Mercy marching by his side
 Calms the red waves of war's tempestuous tide;
 Proudly his banners wave from ev'ry height,
 And ev'ry heart to reason's path invite,
 Another victory and my throne must fall,
 While hated Henry enters Paris' wall;
 He goes to combat, conquer, and forgive,
 I must in chains and bitter bondage live.
 'Tis thine to stay the torrent in its course,
 And of such deeds pollute the limpid source,
 For once subjected to thy pleasing yoke
 Soon shall his courage by thy charms be broke.
 Erst Jove's great son, before thy fatal spell,
 Of Omphalè the helpless conquest fell:
 And did not Antony beneath thy chain,
 Abandon thrones a woman's smile to gain,
 From Cæsar's sword to Cleopatra flee,
 And lose a world to live a slave to thee?

Henry still braves thee; in his proud hands blight
 The laurel, and with theirs his name unite;
 Let thy soft myrtles round his bold brow creep,
 Thy tender spells invite his soul to sleep,
 With thy strong aid sustain my tottering throne,
 Assist my project, for our cause is one."

Thus spoke the fiend, the trembling vaults around
 With horrid din re-echoed to the sound.
 Love heard, and from his couch of flow'rs, a faint
 Smile made in answer to her angry plaint,
 Then rising o'er his back the quiver cast,
 And with light wing thro' yielding azure past:
 Before their lord Sports, Graces, Pleasures dance,
 While Zephyrs bear him to the shores of France.
 Beneath him in his flight he mark'd with joy
 The feeble Simois, and where once was Troy,
 And smil'd in triumph as he there survey'd
 The mighty ruins that his hand had made.
 Next, from afar, fair Venice met his sight,
 The Queen of Ocean and the world's delight;
 To whose bold flag admiring Neptune gave
 A free dominion o'er his stormy wave.
 O'er Sicily he paus'd, for there he fir'd
 Theocritus, and Virgil's strain inspir'd,
 And there of old to Arethusa's bed
 His hand the stream of amorous Alpheus led.
 Now as her dear shores faded from his view
 The God in haste to fertile Provence flew,
 Where lone Vaucluse, renown'd in Petrarch's lays,²
 Still seems to echo Love's and Laura's praise.
 Thro' verdant banks where Eure's glad waters glide,
 Rear'd by his pow'r Anet's proud dome he spied;³
 There the lov'd name of fair Diana grac'd
 Each circling wall by royal Henry trac'd:
 The Loves and Graces as they past her tomb,
 Strew'd o'er it flow'rs that yet in fragrance bloom.

Each scene of victory and triumph past,
 The God arriv'd on Ivry's plains at last,
 Where noble Bourbon, for the chase prepar'd,
 The active labours of the hunter shar'd;
 And tho' rude war no more possess his mind,
 Its semblance with his manly sport was join'd;
 A thousand ardent youths with him prepare
 To drive the wolf and wild boar from their lair.
 With savage pleasure kindling in his heart,
 Love eyed his foe and edg'd each shining dart;
 The sleeping tempests at his word arise,
 And sweep the rude blasts thro' the angry skies;
 The streaming clouds collect, the thunders form,
 The lightnings flash and moans the gathering storm;
 The hanging torrent bursts, the rains descend,
 And night and darkness o'er the world extend;
 Impervious gloom obscures the face of day,
 And Nature bends to Love's eternal sway.

O'er mire and mead, uncertain of the road,
 Perplex'd and wearily the monarch trode,
 No guide, nor escort near, no help at hand,
 Love knew his hour and lit the fatal brand;
 Alone, benighted in the dreary wood,
 The treacherous light he trustingly pursued:
 Thus to the wayworn traveller's cheated eyes,
 The baneful meteors of the rank marsh rise,
 Whose brief malignant light just shows the brink
 Of the tall rock, then leaves him there to sink.

To these deep solitudes by Fortune brought,
 A noble virgin peace and shelter sought;
 Alone and tranquil, from life's tumults far,
 She waits her father, absent at the war,
 Who tried in danger, to his monarch true,
 Still boldly follow'd where his banner flew;

D'Estrée her name,⁴ whom lavish Nature blest
 With ev'ry grace her boundless stores possess;
 Such witching charms not Helen's self display'd,
 The guilty beauty who her lord betray'd;
 Less bright and beautiful of yore 'was seen
 The Roman's victor, Egypt's artful Queen,⁵
 When sail'd her rich bark on the crystal tide
 Of Cydnus, swelling o'er his bank for pride,
 While crowds with mingled awe and rapture gaz'd,
 And as to beauty's Queen their richest incense blaz'd.
 Just enter'd on that dear yet dangerous age
 When the rous'd passions o'er the bosom rage,
 Tho' born to love, her virgin heart till now
 Had never listened to its tender vow.
 Thus oft in early spring the budding rose
 Strives from the view her blushing charms to close,
 Yields each new beauty with a sweet delay,
 But gives them ripen'd to the summer's ray.

Love long had sought the maiden to surprise,
 And now approach'd her in a new disguise;
 No bow, no quiver, and no torch he bore,
 But of a peasant boy the figure wore.
 "Behold," he gently whisper'd in her ear,
 "Mayne's noble victor thro' our woods appear."
 He spoke—and gliding softly thro' her soul,
 A fond desire to please the hero stole;
 Scarce form'd the wish when o'er her lovely mien
 Was livelier grace and presag'd triumph seen.
 A careless art around her dress was thrown,
 That seem'd the work of Nature's hand alone,
 Her auburn locks that on the light breeze play'd,
 Now hid the snowy neck and now betray'd;
 The curious eye each soft charm linger'd o'er,
 Which maiden modesty enhanced the more;
 Not the stern gloom that rigid prudes display,
 Which drives each spell from Beauty's form away,

But that soft, innocent, infantine grace
Which decks with lovelier hue the blushing face,
Inspires respect, inflames desire, requites
With added bliss the passion it excites.

But Love does more (for Love can all perform),
Around the scene he breath'd a mystic charm;
The verdant myrtles which the lavish earth
Gave from her bosom with spontaneous birth,
Invite to their cool shade the lover's feet,
Then, closing round his path, forbid retreat:
Beneath a clear stream flow'd, whose magic wave
To shame and woe a welcome Lethe gave;
Thro' every sense a secret tumult reign'd,
A spell that pleas'd, that troubled and detain'd.
All upon earth, around, beneath, above
Proclaim'd the presence and the pow'r of Love;
On ev'ry bough the tuneful birds prolong
Their amorous kisses and renew their song;
The ardent swain who rose at early morn
With active hand to crop the bearded corn,
Enamour'd stays without the will to go,
And feels new passions in his bosom glow;
The bashful maid reclining by his side,
The flock untended left, the sheaf untied,
With frequent sighs their breasts unconscious heave,
As the rich harvest they neglected leave.
What could d'Estrée against such witchery do?
Her captive heart the same attraction drew:
Vain was the struggle, when, in one combin'd,
Love, youth and glory prest her yielding mind.

Awhile the amorous King's reproachful heart
Bade him in secret from the scene depart,
But still a hand unseen his steps delay'd:
Vainly in his own strength he sought for aid,
Virtue abandons him: his soul that day
Sees, hears, knows only the belov'd Estrée.

Meanwhile his wondering chiefs explore the plain,
 Demand their prince, and in despair remain;
 Fears for his life in ev'ry bosom dwelt,
 But none a terror for his glory felt:
 Vain was the search, no hope the soldiers knew,
 All seem'd defeated when their chief withdrew.

But the kind pow'r who Gallia's realm secures,
 Not long his absence from the war endures;
 By Louis call'd, from Heav'n he glided down
 With rapid wing to guard his son's renown.

Arriv'd on earth his eye survey'd mankind
 From its vain mass one real sage to find.
 Not in the cloister'd silence of the church,
 'Mid pray'r and abstinence was made his search,
 But where on Ivry's plain, by nought restrain'd,
 The soldier's insolence and clamour reign'd,
 Where the free gale on Calvin's banner play'd,
 His heavenly wing the guardian angel stay'd;
 Then fix'd on Mornay—thus fair Reason's light
 Oft serves to guide us in the path of right,
 Aurelius heard and Plato own'd her sway,
 The shame of Christians to our latest day.

A rigid monitor yet prudent friend,
 Mornay would gentleness with censure blend;
 To Virtue's cause his powerful aid he brought,
 And his life better than his lessons taught;
 No toil could weary, no delight allure,
 On pleasure's giddy verge he march'd secure,
 The tainted breath of courts, the statesman's art
 Chang'd not his firm integrity of heart.
 Thus, 'mid the fury of the wondering tides,
 Thy favour'd stream, sweet Arethusa, glides,
 Pure and unmix'd, amid the briny deep,
 Thy waves their crystal and their coolness keep.

By Wisdom's hand the generous Mornay brought,
 The dangerous bow'rs of siren luxury sought:
 There while the victor of mankind remain'd
 In him the destinies of France she chain'd.
 Love ev'ry instant with redoubled might
 And wilier spells his glory came to blight,
 And Pleasure still so blissful and so brief
 Rul'd the glad day and chas'd the rising grief.

As Mornay enter'd, Love with anger eyed
 Stern Wisdom's form attendant at his side:
 Swift 'gainst the sage he aim'd his vengeful dart,
 That charms the senses while it wounds the heart:
 Alike his hate or friendship Mornay spurn'd;
 Free from his breast the blunted arrow turn'd;
 Unharm'd and anxious for his King, he roves
 With virtuous anger thro' the fairy groves.

By the clear stream, in that delicious shade,
 A friendly bow'r where the green myrtle made,
 D'Estrée to Henry lavish of her charms,
 Lay blest and blessing in his manly arms;
 No doubt nor fear their perfect rapture cloy;
 Glad tears were glistening in their conscious eyes
 —Such tears, O Love, thy purest luxury make—
 Heart press'd to heart, ceaseless they give and take
 The thrilling transports, passionate delights,
 Which only Love may paint for Love alone excites.

Young Pleasures danc'd in frolic dalliance round,
 And cherub Loves with rosy garlands crown'd;
 This the strong cuirass from his breast untied,
 That seiz'd his sword with rebel gore bedyed,
 Then laugh'd within his feeble grasp to find
 The bulwark of the throne, the terror of mankind.

Discord his weakness from afar insults,
 And o'er his fall with savage joy exults;

Vith fierce alacrity her plan she takes,
 And from their sloth the hostile League awakes,
 And while the King enjoys his weak repose,
 Excites the slumbering fury of his foes.

O'er Henry's brow a conscious flush there crept
 When Mornay enter'd where his virtue slept;
 A conscious fear their speech and looks restrain'd,
 Unbroke by aught a mutual silence reign'd;
 But that same silence, that averted look
 Too well to Henry's heart his purpose spoke;
 That austere brow and shrinking fear proclaim
 His guilty weakness and discover'd shame.
 To love the witness of our faults is rare!
 Others had ill repaid this guardian care,
 But Henry proudly rous'd himself—"Dear friend!
 Who counsels duty need not fear offend;
 Approach, my heart is worthy still of thee,
 The spell is o'er, at length thy prince is free;
 My contrite soul which Love too long possess
 Now spurns this ignominious idle rest,
 But yet rebelliously it loves the knot
 So long which tied me to this fatal spot.
 Let Paris tremble, and be beauty's charms
 Forgot in honour's fight and glory's arms;
 Vanish my weakness in my foemen's blood
 —Man's brightest victory is himself subdued."

As Mornay heard him, he exclaim'd, "In you
 Again my sov'reign and my pride I view,
 Once more the august defender of our land,
 Your foes to vanquish and yourself command,
 Love gilds your fame with new and brighter hues,
 Blest who ne'er knows it, godlike who subdues."

He ceas'd—the King consenting to depart
 To the sad purpose steel'd his trembling heart;

But who, O who the bitter grief can tell,
 When lovers meet to weep their last farewell;
 Full of the beauty whom he loves yet flies,
 Shame nerves his heart while Grief unmans his eyes;
 Tho' Duty calls yet Love enchains him there,
 He goes, returns, the image of despair,
 While clinging to his side the young d'Estrée,
 With eloquent tears but vain implores his stay;
 And when he went, regardless of her suit,
 Awhile she gaz'd, pale, motionless and mute,
 Then, like a lily bending to the storm,
 She fell, and life forsook her fainting form:
 A sudden film obscur'd her beauteous eyes:
 Love at the sad sight pierc'd the air with cries,
 Alarm'd and anxious lest eternal night
 Should rob his empire of a nymph so bright,
 And quench for ever those dear eyes, whose glance
 Should spread his triumphs o'er the fields of France;
 Gently he rais'd her—at his voice the fair
 Op'd her droop'd lids in answer to his care,
 Breath'd forth one name, sought one lov'd form, in vain,
 Then clos'd with a low sigh their orbs again.
 O'er her the God his tears in torrents shed,
 Then softly call'd her to the life she fled,
 Brought smiling Hope his grateful task to aid,
 And sooth'd the evils that himself had made.

But Mornay's soul, by beauty's tears unbent,
 Pursued its just inflexible intent;
 To Virtue's shrine retrac'd the hero's way,
 Which Glory gilded with her purest ray;
 Vanquish'd by Duty, Love in shame withdrew
 To hide his anger and defeat from view.

BOOK X.

ARGUMENT

The King, restored to his army, recommences the siege of Paris. Single combat between Viscount de Turenne and the Chevalier d'Aumale. A horrible famine desolates the city. The King himself feeds the besieged. Heaven at length recompenses his virtues. Truth arrives to enlighten him. Paris opens to him her gates. The war ends.

THOSE dangerous hours in love and weakness lost
 Restor'd the courage of the vanquish'd host,
 While Mayne his soul to new exploits prepar'd,
 His rising confidence the people shar'd;
 But vain their hope—for Henry rous'd again
 Impatient hastes his conquest to maintain:
 Affrighted Paris view'd with guilty fear
 His warlike bands beneath her walls appear,
 Those walls where yet the scarce extinguish'd fire
 Bore dreadful witness of his mighty ire,
 When Gallia's angel calmed his angry breast,
 Check'd his red arm and bade his passion rest.
 His troops with eager glance the foe survey,
 And with glad cry anticipate their prey.

Meanwhile the League, disturb'd with just affright,
 Rallying around their prudent chief unite;
 There first d'Aumale, foe to each timid plan,
 In fearless language the discourse began:
 "From war no cowardice we've learnt as yet—
 There stands the foe, 'tis there he should be met.

In many a field your chief, I know of old
 Your forward courage and demeanour bold;
 Your daring souls disdain the rampart's shade,
 And sink discourag'd with the fight delay'd:
 Oft, in worst need, despair has victories won;
 Trust not your bastions but yourselves alone:
 People who hear me follow to the field!
 France's brave nobles are her strongest shield."

He ceas'd—the League in solemn silence seem
 To blame the madness of his hardy scheme:
 He blush'd with shame, and in each look confus'd
 Their weak rejection of his hopes perus'd;
 "Fear ye, my countrymen, the battle strife?
 —Affronted thus, I care no more for life;
 The risk you shrink from I alone will try,
 Teach you to conquer, or at least to die."

Then, issuing from the town, with rage possess'd,
 He spurn'd the people who around him prest;
 Before his steps a chosen herald went,
 To Henry's host with stern defial sent:
 "Let all who glory love, contest it here,
 D'Aumale awaits you, let his foes appear."

Seiz'd with a noble zeal and warlike fire,
 The King's bold knights the honour'd place desire;
 Each sought the risk, each merited reward,
 But Fortune smil'd upon Turenne's good sword:
 "Go," said the King, ungirding from his side
 The trusty steel, "chastise their rebel pride:
 Guard with a monarch's blade a monarch's right,
 And for thyself, thy prince and country fight."
 "Never, my liege, thy hopes shall be deceiv'd,"
 Turenne replied, as he the gift receiv'd,
 "By thee, and by this sacred pledge, I swear
 My foe to conquer or to perish there."

He spoke, and, darting from the royal tent,
 O'er the wide plain in bounding courage went,
 Where in full confidence of youthful blood
 D'Aumale his enemy expecting stood.
 Quick to the walls the anxious Leaguers flew,
 And Henry's soldiers round their monarch drew;
 While slow yet firm the combatants advance,
 From either side is bent the searching glance;
 Each for the issue of the combat fear'd,
 And each with thrilling cry their champion's bosom cheer'd.

Now o'er the town a black cloud rising high
 Spread storm and thunder through the troubled sky;
 From whose dark burning breast that open'd wide,
 The fiends of Hell in bristling order stride.
 Red War, fierce Discord, Bigotry severe,
 And sombre Policy, with subtle leer
 And faithless heart—such Gods the League adore!
 Worthy their band and drunk with human gore;
 These on the lofty walls conjoin'd alight,
 And cheer their hero to the dangerous fight.
 But vain their aid, for, mark! from Heav'n descending
 An angel comes the righteous cause defending,
 Girded with light and gemm'd with many a ray
 Swift thro' the glowing east he bends his way;
 There as his radiant wings their passage cleave,
 A track of furrowy light behind they leave:
 High in one hand an olive branch he bore,
 Omen of welcome peace and discord o'er,
 While glitter'd in his right the fatal brand
 Which arm'd of yore the avenging Angel's hand,
 What time the Eternal to a pitiless grave
 Of insolent Egypt all her first-born gave.
 Aw'd at the flash of that appalling blade,
 A sudden fear the hellish crew dismay'd;
 Seized with a secret and resistless spell
 Down from their trembling hands the weapons fell.

Thus from the presence of the one true Lord
 Shrunk the fierce Dagon¹ Philistines ador'd,
 His bloody altar crumbling to its base,
 When met the holy ark his dazzled gase.

Now on the issue of the fight intent,
 Earth, Heav'n and Hell their eager glances bent.
 The barrier open'd by great Henry's hand,
 In honour's lists the noble rivals stand.
 Their sinewy arms no solid buckler bore,
 No sheathing mail their stout breasts cover'd o'er ;
 The sterner panoply of martial dress
 That makes the combat long, the danger less,
 Whate'er of wont protected and adorn'd
 The ancient knight, their dauntless ardour scorn'd;
 A sword at once their weapon and their shield,
 Fearless they enter on the listed field.
 "O righteous God"—so pray'd Turenne—"descend,
 Sit on mine arm and Henry's cause defend:
 Vain is the courage of the boldest blade,
 And weak is man if Heav'n deny its aid."
 —"My own good cause my own strong arm defends;
 On us the destiny of war depends:
 Vainly to God in abject pray'r we cry,
 Unmov'd he listens from his throne on high:
 Success still smiles upon the side of right,
 And victory ever valour will requite."
 Thus spoke d'Aumale as with presumptuous pride
 His rival's modest confidence he eyed.

The trumpet calls, obedient to its sound,
 Quick to the fight the daring champions bound;
 The hero's ardour with the veteran's skill,
 That guards its lord or seeks its foe to kill,
 The hand to deal, the heart to bear unmov'd,
 Their strength, their valour, and experience prov'd;
 Keen to assault or skilful to defend,
 From either side the frequent blows descend;

This now attacks, with sudden rage inspir'd,
 That from the charge with steady pace retir'd;
 Next foot to foot and blade to blade they join'd,
 And in their risk a horrid pleasure find;
 Each scans his foe with cool and cautious glance,
 They struggle, parry, pause, again advance:
 With rapid feints that cheat the astonish'd eye
 And ready art they turn the weapons by:
 The clashing blades a fitful lustre make
 Like rays reflected from the crystal lake:
 Their anxious friends with hope or terror tost,
 Deem in each blow the battle won or lost:
 D'Aumale with passion and with ardour glows,
 Turenne more art and greater coolness shows,
 Bold without rashness, without anger warm,
 At will he wearies his opponent's arm;
 In vain attempts d'Aumale his vigour spends,
 Till his tir'd frame beneath the conflict bends:
 This mark'd Turenne, and prest with many a blow
 Of vengeful hate upon his weaken'd foe:
 Too sure the aim; the hero's gushing breast
 And staggering foot the fatal wound confest;
 Breathless, extended on the bloody sand,
 The half-rais'd blade drops from his graspless hand;
 He strives to speak, but the slow difficult breath
 And failing tongue betray impending death;
 Threatens his brow, his anguish'd eyes proclaim
 The painful feeling of departed fame:
 He struggles yet—in vain that dying look,
 To Paris turn'd, the soul's last curses spoke.

Back to the town, his latest battle o'er,
 With measur'd pace their hapless chief they bore;²
 Slowly and sad the breathless corse convey'd
 In fatal pomp the gazing crowds dismay'd;
 The dim fix'd eye where death his triumphs spread—
 The draggled tresses and the hanging head—

The cold clench'd hand, the brow with gore bedyed—
 The half-clos'd lip and mangled form they eyed.
 No tear was seen, no cry was heard to show
 The heart's deep grief, the bitterness of woe;
 Fear, shame and pity in each humbled breast,
 Restrain'd the useless sigh, the tear repress;
 E'en Mayne, despairing, at that moment felt
 All his bright dreams like fading frostwork melt,
 Saw in thy death, lamented, rash d'Aumale,
 His fondest hopes of future glory fall.

Trembling they stood, when to augment their fear
 A horrid tumult broke upon the ear,
 For Henry's soldiers, eager for the fight,
 Demand the assault and round their chiefs unite.
 But the sage Louis, whose protecting eye
 Still watch'd o'er Gallia's welfare from on high,
 The dreadful courage of the monarch rein'd,
 And his just vengeance for awhile restrain'd.
 Thus God at will enchains the angry winds,
 Plants the long barrier that the ocean binds,
 Bids empires rise or fall at his command,
 And holds the hearts of mortals in his hand.

Henry, obedient to the high behest,
 The glowing anger of his troops repress;
 With all their faults he lov'd his people still,
 And sought to save them from impending ill;
 Ready to spare and joyful to forgive,*
 They rush to ruin, but he bids them live;
 Blest if, at length by constant kindness gain'd,
 They sought the mercy which they then disdain'd;
 Tho' sure of victory he yields them time
 To own their weakness and repent their crime;
 No more he fights, but leaves them to a foe,³
 Who stronger far shall surer strike the blow;
 Nourish'd in luxury the stubborn band
 May ill the grasp of biting famine stand;

But bow'd with want, from long misfortune weak,
 With bended knee they soon will pardon seek.
 No—madly blind, against his mercy steel'd,
 They dare the hazard and disdain to yield;
 The royal pow'r and pardon they disclaim,
 And weakness deem what from his pity came;
 Fierce from indulgence, they defy his right,
 Insult his patience and his vengeance slight:
 Secure they deem'd themselves, but when no more
 The captive Seine her wonted tribute bore,
 When to the rebel town no crowded wain
 Brought the rich harvest of the fertile plain,
 Then Want her pale and cruel aspect rear'd,
 And Death, attendant on her steps, appear'd;
 Then rose the fearful howlings of Despair,
 The cry of Woe that found no succour there;
 In vain the feeble voice and trembling hand
 The needful sustenance of life demand;
 E'en wealth avail'd not—each wild struggle past,
 Amid his hoards the rich man starv'd at last;
 No more, their brows with summer garlands crown'd,
 Thro' the glad mazes of the dance they bound,
 No more they gather at the festive board,
 With costly wines and richest viands stor'd;
 Where luxury scatter'd with ingenious waste
 All that could please the eye, or tempt the dainty taste.
 How alter'd now! with pale and squalid mien
 Gallia's proud nobles are expiring seen;
 In gilded halls they miserably die,
 And curse their useless splendour with a sigh.
 And none escap'd—unmov'd the hoary sire
 Saw without aid his darling child expire;
 Friends fought with friends—striving in life's last gasp,
 They rend the offal from each other's grasp;
 Love, friendship, gratitude alike were gone,
 Man felt and struggled for himself alone;

Now wild with hunger, raving with despair,
 From the rank grave the famish'd spectres tear
 The mouldering ashes of their fathers dead,
 And work the bony powder into bread.
 Detested act! what will not hunger do?
 Their crime was dreadful and its vengeance too;
 Madly they died who shar'd the foul repast,⁴
 And found the meal of sacrilege their last.

Not thus the priests, their bigot tutors, far'd,
 The general dearth, the public misery shar'd;
 They 'neath the altar's holy shade reclin'd,⁵
 To their own wants their selfish cares confin'd;
 With ready eloquence and solemn pray'r
 They fir'd the courage of the crowd to bear;
 E'en where the failing breath and vacant eye
 Told death's approach they promis'd bliss on high;
 By turns their liberal prophecies display'd
 The bands of Austria marching to their aid,
 Heav'n's thunder darted on their impious foes,
 And manna falling to relieve their woes.
 Alas! too soon, too willingly deceiv'd,
 These sterile promises the crowd believ'd;
 Sway'd by their priests, or by their chiefs compell'd,
 In treason's needy path they steadfast held;
 Content to suffer, and prepar'd to die,
 In life's last struggle breath'd no selfish sigh.

A host of strangers thro' the city spread,
 Fiends whom our fathers in their bosom bred,
 With hearts more iron and unpitying far
 Than death, than famine, or relentless war:
 Some from low Belgium's swarming plains, or where
 Helvetia's mountains⁶ lift their snows in air;
 Whose trade is blood, whose succour gold secures,
 And faithful only while their fee endures;

Greedy for rapine, round the leaguer'd gate
 Of each suspected house the tyrants wait;
 To the stunn'd host they menace death no more
 To force a knowledge of the useless ore,
 Nor with adulterous hand rudely to tear
 The weeping daughter from her mother's care;
 The gnawing tooth of cruel want repress
 All other feeling in the human breast;
 The glad discovery of some meagre food
 The only end their horrid search pursued;
 Skilful in cruelty they left no pain
 Untried, no torment spar'd, their aim to gain:
 A woman?—must the shuddering Muse proceed
 And memory recal the dreadful deed!—
 The scanty remnant of whose mouldering store
 From her weak grasp the hungry tyrants tore,
 Had now, of all by cruel fortune left,
 Last of her race one famish'd infant left;
 Furious with sorrow and with famine wild,
 She seiz'd a dagger and approach'd her child;
 The faint smile lingering o'er his sickly face,
 His arms e'en then extended to embrace,
 His helpless youth, sweet looks, and piteous cries,
 Drew torrents from the anguish'd mother's eyes;
 She bent on him their gaze, where mingling strove
 Rage with compassion and despair with love;
 Thrice from her weak hand fell the lifted blade,
 And thrice her love the purpos'd crime delay'd:
 At length with hollow voice she feebly said,
 Cursing her marriage and its fruitful bed,
 "Dear wretched child that these fond arms have nurst,
 Vainly hast thou with useless life been curst;
 To thee what hope do lengthen'd days afford?
 To fall at last by famine or the sword;
 Why should'st thou live? thro' desert streets to roam,
 To weep and wander o'er a ruin'd home;

Die, ere thy wakening sense the light shall lend
 To feel the woe, the wants that life attend;
 Give back the blood, the being that I gave,
 And let my body be thy womb and grave."
 —Fir'd with her words, with desperate rage possess'd,
 She plung'd the dagger in her infant's breast,
 Then to the fire his mangled carcass bears,
 And greedily her horrid meal prepares.

Lur'd by the scent of food, the rising smoke,
 On the dread scene the famish'd soldiers broke,
 Like tigers darting on their helpless prey,
 Their ravenous looks a savage joy betray;
 Each emulous of each in hunger vies,
 And breathless haste—O horror! O surprise!
 Beside the body of her slaughter'd child,
 The maniac mother sate and grimly smil'd;
 Corpselike and cold, her brow look'd up thro' gore,
 And her keen hands the smouldering members tore:
 —"Yes, 'tis my son, inhuman fiends!" she said,
 "Whose innocent blood these murdering hands have shed;
 Be child and mother now your food—why pause,
 Fear ye then more than me to outrage Nature's laws?
 What horrors seem your utterance to subdue?
 Monsters! such vengeance is reserv'd for you."
 Then madden'd with her rage, her guilt, she ceas'd,
 And hid the fatal weapon in her breast:
 The soldiers, seized with horror and dismay,
 Rush'd from the guilty scene in haste away,
 Confus'd and trembling, lest Almighty ire
 Should reach and rend them with avenging fire;
 The crowd, disgusted at her horrid fate,
 Lift their lank hands to Heav'n and calmly death await.

Soon spread the rumour to the royal ears,
 With pity fill'd his heart, his eye with tears;
 "O God," he cried, "thou see'st the heart of man,
 Thou knowest what we are and what we can;

Look down, decide between the League and me;
 In confidence I raise my hands to thee,
 For not from me these sins and sufferings spring;
 Let Mayne fresh victims to the slaughter bring,
 And, stale excuse for ev'ry shameful deed
 Which tyrants urge, necessity then plead,
 Seduce my subjects' faith, lay waste my land
 —'Tis mine their father and their friend to stand,
 'Tis mine to feed my children, mine the care
 From ravening wolves my wandering flock to tear;
 Yet why give arms against myself to use?
 Perchance in saving them my crown I lose;
 Down, down my selfish heart—come what come will,
 Despite her wish my France shall flourish still;
 And should my mercy cost my throne, this be
 My country's only epitaph on me,
 That Henry, pitying his starving foes,
 Rather to save them than to rule them chose."

He spoke—and to the famish'd town decreed^s
 His dreaded army should as friends proceed;
 In place of vengeance benefits declare,
 And acts of love and words of peace prepare:
 The troops his merciful command pursue;
 Thick to the walls the wondering people drew;
 But who their skeleton array shall trace,
 The livid aspect and the trembling pace,
 (Like the pale shades which ancient poets write
 Their Magi summon'd from the realms of night,
 At whose dread accents Styx its torrent stay'd,
 And Hell with all its wandering ghosts obey'd)
 Or paint how transport and surprise subdued
 Their fainting hearts to see the proffer'd food;
 Their own proud chiefs torment them and expose,
 They meet with mercy only from their foes;
 Scarce can they credit what they see and hear,
 But doubtingly regard the sword and spear,

Which, late the instruments of war and strife,
 Are lifted now to yield their hunger life.
 Wayward as brave their foemen food supply,
 And in love's glad task with each other vie.
 "Is this the being by our priests design'd
 Religion's foe, the tyrant of mankind,
 Who scorn'd his Maker and his land oppress?
 No, rather in God's glorious image drest,
 Wise, just and mild, a model for the throne,
 Unworthy we his gentle rule to own;
 Arm'd but to guard us, conquering but to save,
 We vow to him the life his mercy gave."

Thus spoke the soften'd crowd: but where the pow'r
 To fix their love beyond the passing hour,
 Their feeble friendship that in breath exhales,
 Their clamorous kindness that in action fails?
 The priests whose fatal eloquence so long
 To each excess had led the blinded throng,
 Whose bigot rage so oft had ravag'd France,
 To prop their threaten'd reign, in solemn pomp advance.

"Soldiers," they cried, "without the heart to dare,
 Christians, without the fortitude to bear,
 What fancied blessing lures you to destroy
 The certain recompense of heavenly joy?
 Why fear ye more in Heav'n's just cause to die,
 Than live its wrath eternal to defy?
 When God on high a crown of bliss prepares,
 Christians, regard not that a tyrant spares;
 What seeks his tardy kindness but to lead
 Your grateful hearts to own his guilty creed?
 No, rise and guard our holy church from foes,
 Receive his gifts but use them to oppose."

The subtle speech the voice of conscience still'd,
 And the weak crowd's returning fealty chill'd,

Who soon the King's benevolence forget,
 Their hate resume and rescued lives regret.

Despite their clamour and their odious cries,
 At length the monarch's virtue pierc'd the skies;
 Louis who ever from his seat on high
 Watch'd o'er the Bourbons with a father's eye,
 Now saw that the appointed time was run,
 And Heav'n was ready to adopt his son:
 Then vanish'd from his heart each doubt and fear,
 And from his eye Faith dried the lingering tear,
 Soft Hope, and Love paternal by her side,
 Came smilingly his willing steps to guide,
 Where, high 'mid fires whose pure light ceaseless shone,
 Ere Time was born, God fix'd his mighty throne:
 Heav'n is beneath—a thousand planets there
 To wondering worlds his guiding hand declare;
 Pow'r, Love, and Knowledge, by no bounds confin'd,
 His essence form, divided yet combin'd;
 In sweet fruition of eternal peace,
 The round of joys that neither cloy nor cease,
 Full of his pow'r and glory, songs of praise
 His Saints in rival adoration raise.
 Seraphim and Cherubim before him wait,
 To whom of nations he commits the fate;
 He speaks—and momentarily o'er earth they range,
 Mow down her great and proud, her aspect change;
 While, sport of chance and slave of error, man
 Condemns the pride of the Eternal plan.
 Of old their justice breath'd the withering doom,
 Which to the wild north gave degraded Rome,
 Spain's beauteous valleys to Mohammed's sword,
 And holy Sion to the Othman horde;
 Empires on empires rise, as wave on wave,
 Each has its tyrants, triumphs, and its grave;
 But Providence, inscrutable and just,
 Consents not always insolence to trust,

And oft his love, propitious to mankind,
To Virtue's hand the sceptre has assign'd.

Humbly the Saint before his footstool bow'd
As with slow speech and sad his purpose he avow'd.

"Creator of the world, if e'er from high
Looks down on mortal woes thine awful eye,
Then deign to bend awhile its favouring glance,
And heal the bleeding wounds of hapless France,
Whose generous sons by bigot zeal misled,
Lift 'gainst their virtuous King a factious head,
Faithful to thee unknowing disobey,
And arm'd to guard unwillingly betray:
Behold their King, invincible in fight,
Of earth the dread, the model, and delight,
Hast thou his heart with so much virtue fram'd,
In error's maze to wander unreclaim'd?
Most perfect of thy glorious works, shall he
Bend at thine altars with unholy knee?
O, if to him thy worship be unknown,
Whom as its children will thy greatness own?
Illume his heart which longs thy grace to know,
To Rome her child, to France her King bestow;
His foes defeat, betray their black design,
Subjects to prince, and prince to subjects join,
Till at one shrine, the empire's discord o'er,
Their grateful hearts thy justice shall adore."

He ceas'd—and God, propitious to his pray'r,
Deign'd in one solemn word his pleasure to declare:
Shook at the voice divine each listening star,
Earth moan'd, the Leaguers trembled from afar;
But Henry's heart, whose hope on Heav'n relied,
Knew that the Highest now espous'd his side.

Sudden, the long-wish'd blessing, Truth, so dear
 To man, but known by him so little here,
 Falls on the monarch's spirit from on high:
 Tho' veil'd awhile from his inquiring eye,
 The shades which first her heavenly form conceal'd,
 Before its influence gradually yield,
 Till to his happy gaze she stands confest,
 In brilliant but innocuous splendour drest.

Henry, whose heart was form'd to own her sway,
 Saw, knew, and cherish'd the immortal ray,
 Avow'd with faith that God's mysterious plan
 Surpass'd the reason of untutor'd man;
 Own'd in the church he long denied belief,
 Free but subjected to its Heav'n-taught chief,
 The one, the universal, which ador'd
 In triumph of its saints the greatness of the Lord.
 Christ, the regenerate victim of our sin,
 Whose spirit reigns his chosen priests within,
 In love descends and to his longing gaze,
 A mystic God in holy bread displays;
 The obedient King the welcome gift receives
 And wonderingly yet faithfully believes.

Each wish complete his anxious love had plann'd,
 Bearing the peaceful olive in his hand,
 From Heav'n the grateful Louis glided down,
 To guide the hero to the wavering town;
 At God's dread name in twain the ramparts cleave,⁹
 And to his march an open passage leave;
 The priests stand dumb: oppress'd with guilt and awe,
 To distant caves the rebel chiefs withdraw,
 Or throwing down their arms in contrite fears,
 Kneel at the monarch's feet and bathe them with their tears;
 And the chang'd mob, hailing the glorious day,
 Their King, their conqueror, and sire obey.

From that glad hour a prosperous reign arose,
Too late for France begun, too soon to close;
Spain fear'd; and Rome, by his obedience won,
Receives the homage of her virtuous son;
Discord withdraws into eternal night;
And Mayne, reduc'd to 'own a sov'reign's right,
To Henry's throne, with penitent bosom brings
The best of subjects of the best of kings.

NOTES.

BOOK I.

¹ HENRY III., King of France, is, in this poem, of which he is a principal personage, always called Valois, the name of the royal branch from which he sprung.

² As Duke of Anjou he commanded the forces of his brother Charles IX. against the Protestants, and, at eighteen, gained the battles of Jarnac and Moncontour.

³ Henry IV., its hero, is called in this poem Bourbon or Henry indifferently.

⁴ St. Louis, ninth of that name, King of France, and the head of the line of Bourbon.

⁵ Henry IV., King of Navarre, had been solemnly excommunicated by the Pope Sixtus V. so far back as 1585, three years before the event here in question. The Pope in his bull calls him "the bastard and detestable offspring of the house of Bourbon," and deprives him and all the family of Condé for ever of all their domains and fiefs, and especially declares them incapable of succeeding to the crown.

⁶ Henry, Prince of Condé—son of Louis who was killed at Jarnac—and the hope of the Protestant party. He died at the age of thirty-five, in the year 1585.

⁷ Duplessis-Mornay, the greatest and most virtuous man of the Protestant party. He was called "*the Pope of the Huguenots*."

⁸ Julius Cæsar waited at Apollonia, in Epirus, the arrival of his troops from Italy. As, notwithstanding his reiterated orders, they were still delayed, he determined to go and bring them on himself. Departing secretly and in disguise, he embarked alone, on a wintry night, in a small bark for Brundisium, though the space which he had to traverse was covered with the enemy's fleets. The sea was violently agitated by storms, the bark almost buried in the waves, and the pilot, losing courage, sought to return. Cæsar perceiving this, rose up and addressed him, "*Quid times, Cæsarum solis?*"

BOOK II.

¹ Francis, Duke of Guise, then commonly called the Great Duke, and father of *le Balafre* (Note 18, and 3 of Book iii.). He, and the Cardinal, his brother, laid the foundations of the League. He was a man of great abilities, which however should be carefully distinguished from virtues (Note 8).

² Henry II., who died in 1559, in the forty-first year of his age, and the thirteenth of his reign, from a wound in the eye received in a tournament.

³ Catharine of Medicis quarrelled with her son Charles IX. towards the end of his life, and afterwards with Henry III. She had been so openly displeased with Francis II., that she was even suspected, though unjustly, of having hastened his death.

⁴ A letter from the Prince of Condé exists wherein she thanks him for having taken up arms against the court.

⁵ She was accused of intrigues with the Vidame of Chartres and with a Breton

gentleman, named Moscouet. Thinking the battle of Dreux—the first pitched battle, in 1562, between the Catholic and Protestant parties—lost, and that the enemy had won the day, she said, “*Well, then, we must pray to God in French.*” She was weak enough to believe in magic, as the talismans found after her death testify.

* Francis II. ascended the throne on the death of his father, and died, at the age of seventeen, in 1560. His servants called him “*the King without vices,*” and, adds the Historical Dictionary, without virtues.

† Anne de Montmorency, an obstinate and inflexible man, the most unfortunate general of his time; made prisoner at Pavia and at Dreux, in 1562, defeated at St. Quentin, and at last mortally wounded at St. Denis.

‡ The same who is before mentioned (Note 1), famous by his defence of Metz against Charles V. He was besieging the Protestants in Orleans, in 1563, when Peltret de Méré, a gentleman of Angoulême, killed him from behind by a shot from a pistol loaded with three poisoned balls. He died at the age of forty-four, covered with glory, and much regretted by the Catholics.

§ Antony de Bourbon, King of Navarre, father of the most intrepid and firmest of men, was himself the weakest and least decided: he was a Huguenot, and his wife, Jane d’Albret, a Catholic; they both changed their religions nearly at the same time; she, however, became a staunch Protestant, but Antony always wavered so in his Catholicity that it was even doubtful in what religion he died. He bore arms against the Protestants whom he loved, and served Catharine of Medicis whom he detested, and the party of the Guises, who oppressed him. He died, in 1562, at the age of forty-four, from a wound received in his left shoulder by a shot from an arquebuse, at the siege of Rouen, where he commanded.

|| Louis de Condé—brother of Antony, King of Navarre, the seventh and last child of Charles de Bourbon, Duke de Vendôme—was one of those extraordinary men born for the misfortune and the glory of their country. He was long the chief of the Reformed party, and was killed at Jarnac. He had an arm in a scarf on the day of battle; when advancing against the enemy, the horse of his brother-in-law the Comte de la Rochefoucauld kicked him, and broke his leg: the prince, without deigning to complain, merely said to the gentlemen who accompanied him, “*Fiery horses do more harm than good, you see, in an army;*” an instant after he again spoke, “*With an arm in a scarf, and a broken leg, the Prince of Condé fears not to give battle, since you follow him,*” and immediately charged. Brantome says that, after the prince had given himself up as a prisoner to Dargence in this battle, a very “honest and excellent” gentleman, named Montesquiou, having asked who he was, on being told that he was the Prince de Condé, said, “*Kill, kill,*” and shot him with a pistol in the head. Montesquiou was captain of the guards of the Duke of Anjou, afterwards Henry III. The Comte de Soissons, a younger son of the Prince de Condé, sought Montesquiou and his relations everywhere, to sacrifice them to his vengeance. Henry IV., although not then fourteen, was present at Jarnac, and observed the faults which caused the loss of the battle.

¶ Gaspard de Coligny, Admiral of France, &c., after the death of the Prince de Condé was declared the chief of the Reformed party in France. Catharine de Medicis and Charles IX. succeeded in bringing him to court, in 1572, for the marriage of Henry IV. and Margaret of Valois, sister of Charles IX. and Henry III. He was murdered on the

day of Saint Bartholomew, a few days after the marriage: the massacre was designed principally against this great man.

¹² Gaston de Foix, Duke de Nemours, nephew of Louis XII., immortalised his name by his exploits and victories in Italy. He repulsed an army of Swiss, expelled the Pope from Bologna, and gained, in 1512, the celebrated battle of Ravenna, where he lost his life, at the age of twenty-four. The Comte de Dunois, born in 1407, died in 1468, was considered a second Du Guesclin, no less formidable to the English than that famous constable. Charles VII., who owed so much to his sword, gave him the glorious title of Saviour of his country.

¹³ It has been asserted that the project of the massacre of the Huguenots was formed eight years previously, that the Duke of Alba had so counselled Catharine of Medici during the conference which he had with her at Bourdeaux. Others think that it was only formed at the time of the last peace with the Huguenots. Some writers have also alleged that Charles IX. knew nothing of the project even when the Admiral was wounded, that he spoke in good faith when he swore to punish his assassins, and that then the Queen confessed to him that she was herself one of the accomplices, and got him to consent at once to commit the very crime which he had just sworn to avenge, and to cause the butchery of a hundred thousand of his subjects whom he had just pardoned. Others again have thought that the project of the Queen was to have the Admiral killed by assassins in the pay of the Duke of Guise, and then to attack with the guards the duke and his satellites: that thus Charles IX., delivered at once from the two heads of party whom he might fear, would, in the eyes of all Europe, have the honour of having punished the crime of the Duke of Guise. The skill and sagacity of his brother *le Balafre* caused the failure of this project. The three first of the above opinions are supported by probabilities sufficiently strong. What, however, is certain is, that in the execution of the project there was as much irresolution as atrocity; that the leaders were not agreed among themselves as to anything; that the Duke of Guise wished to involve in the massacre all the great families who were faithful to the King; that he multiplied the victims; that, when Charles IX. came before the Parliament to accuse, with so much baseness, the Admiral of a pretended conspiracy, he was ready, and perhaps had already sent counter-orders to the provinces; that all the orders did not emanate from him; and finally, that the popular fanaticism, the barbarity of Charles IX., of the Duke of Anjou, and of their mother, were, on this occasion, only the instruments of projects of which they might themselves have been the victims.

¹⁴ Jane d'Albret, attracted to Paris with the other Huguenots; died after a malignant fever of five days: the time of her death, the massacres which followed it, the fear that her courage might well have given to the court, the nature of her attack gave rise to a belief that she died of poison, and Catharine of Medici was suspected of having had it administered to her. But, if any such crime were indeed committed, no proofs of it have remained.

¹⁵ This bloody tragedy was executed on the night of the 23rd-24th August, 1572, on the festival of Saint Bartholomew.

¹⁶ The Comte de Taligny had married, ten months before, the Admiral's daughter. His face was so agreeable and mild that those who first came to kill him were softened at his sight: but others were cruel murdered him.

¹⁷ It is impossible to know if, as the Protestants allege, Catharine of Medicis sent the head of the Admiral to Rome: but it is certain that it was brought to the Queen. The mob dragged the body through the streets, and hung it by the heels with a chain of iron on the gallows at Montfaucon. The King had the cruelty to go there with his whole court to enjoy the horrid spectacle. Some one having said to him that the body of the Admiral smelt badly, he answered, as did Vitellius before him, "*The dead body of an enemy always smells well.*" The King went before the Parliament to accuse the Admiral of a conspiracy: and the Parliament pronounced a decree against the dead man, ordering that his body, after having been dragged upon a hurdle, should be publicly hanged, that his children should be declared commoners, and incapable of holding any office, that his house should be razed, the timbers felled, &c., and that there should be a yearly procession on Saint Bartholomew's day to thank God for the discovery of the conspiracy—of which the Admiral had never dreamt.

¹⁸ Henry, Duke of Guise, son of the Duke Francis (Notes 1 and 8), surnamed the *Balafré*, afterwards famous for the Barricades, and who was assassinated at Blois.

¹⁹ Frederic de Gonzague, of the house of Mantua, Duke de Nevers, one of the authors of the massacre.

²⁰ Gaspard de Tavanne was brought up as a page of Francis I. He ran through the streets on the night of St. Bartholomew, crying, "*Blood, blood—bleeding is as good in August as in May.*"

²¹ Antoine de Clermont-Renel was massacred, while escaping in his shirt, by his own cousin among others. The Marquis de Pardaillan was killed at his side.

²² Guerechy defended himself for a long time in the street, killing several of the murderers before he was overpowered by numbers: but the Marquis de Lavardin had not time even to draw his sword.

²³ MARSEILLAC, Comte de la Rochefoucauld, was a favourite of Charles IX., and had passed part of the night with him. Charles had some wish to save him, and even told him to sleep in the Louvre; but at last he let him go, saying, "*I see plainly that God decrees his death.*" SOUBISE took this name from having married the heiress of the house of Soubise. His own name was Dupont-Quellenec. He defended himself a very long time, and fell pierced with wounds beneath the windows of the Queen.

²⁴ When it was daylight, the King put his head out of the window of his room, and seeing some people in the Fauxbourg St. Germain astir and escaping, he took his long hunting-piece and fired many shots at them, but in vain, for the arquebuse did not carry so far. He cried incessantly "*Kill, kill.*" (Brantome.) The Marshal de Tesaé, in his childhood, saw a gentleman, more than 100 years old, who, when very young, had been in the guards of Charles IX. Questioned on the events of St. Bartholomew, and whether it was true that the King had fired upon the Huguenots, the old man answered, "*It was I, Sir, who loaded his arquebuse.*"

²⁵ In the Memoirs of Villeroi we find a conversation between Henry III. and one of his confidants on the St. Bartholomew, in which that prince exculpates Charles IX., and accuses his mother and himself. According to this story, Charles IX. was drawn away by the solicitations of his mother and brother, who confessed to him that the murder of Coligny was committed by their order, and that he must either sacrifice them to the Admiral, or sanction the massacre of the Protestants, for which they had already taken measures.

²⁶ Caumont, the famous Marshal de la Force, who afterwards gained so great a reputation, and who lived to the age of eighty-four.

²⁷ Several gentlemen, attached to Henry IV., were murdered in his apartments; others were pursued into the chamber of the Queen, his wife, sister of Charles IX., who saved their lives by throwing herself between them and their murderers. Henry IV. and the Prince de Condé, his cousin, were arrested, menaced with death, and forced to abjure Calvinism. The priests subsequently relied upon this abjuration to accuse him of relapse.

²⁸ At first, couriers were sent to the commandants of provinces and to the heads of the principal towns to order the massacre. Some time after a counter-order was sent, but the massacre was, notwithstanding, carried out in some places, at Lyons among others, where the party of the Guises had the superiority: but in many, the Catholic chiefs opposed the execution of the orders. Many Protestants were saved by their relations, their friends, some even by priests.

BOOK III.

¹ Charles IX. was always ill after the St. Bartholomew, and died about two years subsequently, on the 80th May, 1574, all bathed in his blood, which issued from his pores. Henry IV. was present at his death.

² The reputation which he had acquired at Jarnac and at Moncontour, aided by the gold of France, had caused him to be chosen King of Poland in 1573. He succeeded Sigismund II., the last prince of the race of Jagellon. He reluctantly assumed this crown, and, having learnt, in 1574, the death of his brother, immediately returned to France.

³ Henry de Guise, *le Balafre*, born in 1550. He carried into execution the great plan of the League, formed, at the time of the Council of Trent, by his uncle the Cardinal de Lorraine, and begun by his father Duke Francis.

⁴ Anne, Duke de Joyeuse, fought the battle of Contras against Henry IV., King of Navarre, on the 20th October, 1587. His army was compared to the army of Darius, Henry's to that of Alexander. Joyeuse was killed by two captains of infantry.

⁵ Almost contemporaneously with the defeat of the royal army under Joyeuse at Contras, the Duke de Guise proved himself a very able general against a numerous army of Riehters sent from Germany to the succour of Henry IV.; and, after having long harassed and distressed them, he beat them first at Vimori, and afterwards completely defeated them at Auneau.

⁶ On the day of the Barricades, the Duke de Guise contented himself with sending back to Henry III. his guards, after having disarmed them. He remained sole master of Paris while the fugitive King retired to Chartres.

⁷ The Duke de Guise was killed on Friday, the 23rd December, 1588, at eight A.M. He entered by a small passage into the chamber of the King, that led to a closet, the door of which the King had had stopped up. Ignorant of this, the duke, in order to enter, lifted up the tapestry which covered the door: instantly several of the Gascons, who were called the *forty-five*, pierced him with the poignards which the King had himself distributed to them. In the Castle of Blois a stone in the wall is still shown against which Guise supported himself in falling, and which was first crimsoned with his blood.

⁸ The Duke de Mayenne had long been jealous of the reputation of his elder brother: he had all his great qualities except his activity.

* The Chevalier d'Anjou, brother of the Duke d'Anjou, of the house of Lorraine, a impetuous young man, with some brilliant qualities, who always headed the party during the siege of Paris, and inspired its inhabitants with his own valour and confidence.

10 Philip II., King of Spain, son of Charles V. He was called the *Demon of the South*, because he troubled all Europe in the south of which lies Spain. He sent powerful succours to the League, in the design of causing the crown of France to descend on the Infanta Clara Eugenia, or on some other princess of his family.

11 The Court of Rome, gained over by the Guises, and at this time submissive to Spain, did all in its power to ruin France. Gregory XIII. succoured the League with men and with money; and Sixtus V. commenced his pontificate by the greatest excesses, which fortunately were quite useless, against the royal family.

12 Henry IV., then King of Navarre, had the generosity to go to Tours to see Henry III., followed by a single page, despite the distrust and prayers of his old officers, who feared for him a second St. Bartholomew.

13 Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, famous by his capture of Cadiz from the Spaniards, for the affection which Elizabeth had for him, and by his tragic death in 1601. In fact, in 1590, Queen Elizabeth sent him to the succour of Henry IV., at the head of 5000 men.

14 Sixtus V., the son of a poor vine-dresser, born in a village of the Marches of Ancona, called Grottes, near the castle of Montalto: his father, being unable himself to bring him up, placed him, when a mere boy, with a labourer to take care of his pigs. His turbulence was on a par with his dissimulation. While a Franciscan friar he beat to death the nephew of his provincial, and quarrelled with the whole order. Inquisitor at Venice, he was the cause of trouble there, and was obliged to flee. Become a Cardinal, he framed the bull of excommunication launched by Pope Pius V. against Queen Elizabeth: he nevertheless esteemed that Queen, and called her *UN GRAN CIEVELLO DI PRINCIPERA*, a princess of great judgment.

15 This event was quite recent; for Henry IV. is supposed to make this secret visit to Elizabeth in 1589: it was in 1588 that Philip II. sent to sea his powerful fleet (called the *Invincible Armada*) destined for the conquest of England, but which was in part defeated by Effingham, Drake, &c., and entirely dispersed and destroyed by tempesta.

BOOK IV.

1 Henry, Comte de Bouchage, younger brother of the duke killed at Contras. He quitted the world to become a Capuchin: he left the frock to take up arms against Henry IV.; and lastly, when Duke, and Peer, and Marshal of France, returned to his convent and died there.

2 In their last battle with the Sabines, when the Romans began to lose ground, and even to flee, Romulus lifted up his arms to Heaven and vowed a temple to Jupiter: his army struck with reverence, and acting as under some supernatural power, suddenly stayed their flight, turned against the enemy, renewed the combat, and gained the day.

3 Sixtus V., when Cardinal Montalto, so well counterfeited imbecility for fifteen years that he was commonly called the *Ass of Ancona*. The haughtiness with which he exercised the popedom is as well known as the artifice by which he obtained it.

4 The Sorbonne, the most celebrated school of theology in Europe, was founded in the

thirteenth century by the confessor of Saint Louis, Jean Sorbon, or Sorbonne, born in a village of the same name in Champagne.

⁵ This celebrated decree, declaring the subjects loosed from their oaths of fidelity, and authorising them to arm against the King, is dated 17th January, 1589.

⁶ Exodus, cap. xxxii., ver. 26 to 29.

⁷ When Henry III. and the King of Navarre appeared with their troops before Paris, the greater part of the monks put on armour and mounted guard with the citizens. But this passage more properly describes that procession of the League in which 1200 armed monks were reviewed in Paris, William Rose, Bishop of Senlis, at their head; a fact which did not happen, however, until after the death of Henry III.

⁸ They were called the Sixteen, from the sixteen quarters of Paris, which they governed by their secret correspondents and emissaries. The most factious were those placed at their head.

⁹ The Sixteen were long independent of Mayenne. One of them, named Normand, said one day, in the duke's room, "*Those who made him can easily unmake him.*"

¹⁰ Bussy le Clerc, one of the Sixteen, formerly a fencer, who had become governor of the Bastille, and chief of this faction, entered the grand hall of Parliament, followed by fifty of his fellows, and presented to the assembly a petition, or rather an order, intended to compel them no longer to recognise the royal family. On their refusal to comply, he carried away to the Bastille all those who were opposed to his party, placed them on bread and water in order to compel them to ransom themselves out of his hands: on which account he was called the Grand Penitentiary of Parliament.

¹¹ In the impossibility experienced at Rome, after the battle of Allia, of preventing the entry of the Gauls, it was decided that Manlius with all the Roman youth should occupy and defend the Capitol, and, not to swell the number of useless mouths, that the old should be left below, without defence, to the mercy of the conquerors. With the most heroic resignation these venerable men offered themselves to the sacrifice. Those who had held a consular office, wishing to die with the marks of their old dignity, clothed themselves accordingly, as if for a solemn ceremony, and, placing themselves at the doors of their houses upon their ivory chairs, tranquilly awaited their fate; they were all mercilessly murdered.

¹² The Bastille.

BOOK V.

¹ Jacques Clement, a friar of the Dominican order, and a native of the village of Sorbonne, near Sens, was in his twenty-fifth year, and had just taken priest's orders when he perpetrated this murder.

² The country of the Ammonites, who cast their infants into the flames, to the sound of drums and trumpets, in honour of the deity whom they worshipped under the name of Moloch.

³ Judges, cap. xi., verses 30 to 40.

⁴ A priest, who attended the Greeks in their expedition against Troy, and who declared that their fleet, detained in the port of Aulis by a long dead calm, would never have favourable winds until their leader Agamemnon had sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia to the Goddess Diana, whom he had offended.

⁵ Tautates was one of the principal Gods of the ancient Gauls; human victims were sacrificed to him by the Druids.

⁶ The Independents, by whom the death of Charles I., King of England, was principally brought about.

⁷ Alluding to the Autos da Fe, or yearly executions of heretics, infidels, and Jews made by the Inquisition in Madrid and Lisbon, the capitals of Spain and Portugal respectively.

⁸ Judith, cap. xiii., verses 4 to 10.

⁹ An account of the martyrdom of Jacques Clement was printed and publicly sold, in which it was asserted that an angel had appeared to him, and, displaying to his view a naked sword, commanded him to kill the King. But the general suspicion has since been that some of his brother friars, taking advantage of the weakness of this miserable fanatic, had themselves spoken to him during the night, when, overcome by fasting and superstitiousness, his troubled imagination was easily led to believe that the voice was one from Heaven. However this may be, he prepared for the deed, as a good Christian would have done for the stake, by penance and prayer. He fasted, confessed himself, and received the sacrament before he set out. He left Paris on the 31st of July, 1589, and was taken to St. Cloud by la Gueule, the attorney-general. That functionary, who, with others, suspected some evil attempt on the part of the monk, had him watched during the night. He was found in a deep sleep, his well-thumbed breviary by his side, open at the chapter of the murder of Holofernes by Judith. In order to get admission to the King, he had procured various letters of recommendation, and one in particular, which purported to be written by Harlay, one of the King's chief friends, at that time confined in the Bastille. It has never been sufficiently explained whether this letter was a counterfeit or not: a deficiency which is surprising in a fact of such importance, and which warrants the belief that the letter must have been genuine, though certainly obtained from the President Harlay inadvertently, or for some very different purpose; had it been otherwise, the fact would have told greatly against the League who employed such deceit. Clement was introduced to Henry III. on the 1st of August, 1589, the day after his arrival at St. Cloud. The King rose from his seat and received the letters in succession from the hands of Clement, who observing that he had reserved until then one of importance, put his hand into his sleeve, and pulled thence a two-edged knife, with which he immediately struck the King in the belly, leaving the weapon in the wound. The King, finding himself hurt, exclaimed, "*Ah, malheureux que t'avois-je fait pour me assassiner ainsi!*" At the sound of his voice the courtiers rushed in, by which time Valois had withdrawn the knife from the wound and struck the monk with it on the forehead; this being immediately taken by the attendants as a signal, they pierced him with numberless wounds, the assassin crying out to the last, "*I bless God, I die happy.*" His body was flung into the street, burnt there, and its ashes thrown into the Seine.

¹⁰ The Queen-Mother had brought magic so much into fashion in France that a priest of the name of Seychelles, who was burned for sorcery in the reign of Henry III., accused twelve hundred people of this pretended crime. Ignorance and stupidity were carried so far in those times that exorcisms and condemnation to the flames formed almost the only subject of conversation. Men were found everywhere sufficiently foolish to believe themselves magicians, and superstitious judges punished them as such in all good faith.

¹¹ Jews were, ordinarily, employed to conduct magical operations. This ancient super-

stitution proceeded from the idea that they were, as they said, the sole depositaries of the secret knowledge and mysteries of past ages. Catharine de Medicis, the Marechale d'Ancre, and many others employed them on such occasions.

¹² Many priests of the League had had made small waxen images, representing the figures of Henry III. and the King of Navarre, which they placed upon the altar, and for forty successive days, during the celebration of mass, pricked with pointed weapons, and on the last day pierced them to the heart.

¹³ A hill of Galilee, where the witch of Endor raised to Saul the ghost of Samuel. 28th Samuel I., verses 7, 8, 11 to 15, 20.

¹⁴ 22nd 1st Kings, verses 10 to 23.

¹⁵ A tribune of the people at Rome, who having failed to dissuade Crassus from his expedition against the Parthians, placed a burning cauldron at the gate of the city whence he took his departure, cast certain magical herbs therein, and, invoking the infernal deities, devoted the expedition to destruction.

¹⁶ The King died of the wound on the morning of the 8rd of August, at the age of thirty-nine; the injury was not in itself mortal, but the knife was poisoned. With him perished the branch of Valois, which had reigned 261 years, and given thirteen kings to France. It has been said that he died in the very house where, seventeen years before, he had assisted at the council in which the massacre of St. Bartholomew was resolved upon. This, however, cannot be true, as the house was not then built.

¹⁷ The King of Navarre knelt at his bedside, sighs and tears not permitting him to speak. He took his Majesty's hands between his own and kissed them. The King, perceiving that he was silent through strong emotion, embraced his head, kissed him, and gave him his benediction. The next day the King died.

¹⁸ Crillon, surnamed the Brave, to whom Henry IV., from his field of victory at Arques, wrote his famous laconic letter: "*Hang thyself, Crillon! we fought at Arques, and you were not there.—Adieu, brave Crillon. I love you, right or wrong.*"

BOOK VI.

¹ Louis V., known under the name of le Fainéant, died without issue in the year 987. He was the last of the Carlovingian dynasty: for the crown of France, which should, by hereditary right, have fallen to his paternal uncle Charles, Duke of Lorraine, was then given by the General States of the kingdom to Hugh Capet.

² The author, paying more regard to poetical design than to actual chronology of events, supposes the assembly of the States to have taken place immediately after the death of Henry III., whereas they were not, in fact, held till four years after.

³ The Inquisition, which the Dukes of Guise wished to establish in France.

⁴ President of the Parliament, through whose exertions the designs of Spain and the League against the throne were chiefly defeated: and by whose efforts the celebrated edict which forbade the carrying of the crown out of the royal family was passed.

⁵ Mortars were first brought into use in the wars in the Low Countries. Their invention is ascribed to an Italian engineer.

⁶ Elizabeth had about this time forwarded supplies of men and money to France.

The body of 4000 soldiers which had first arrived, under the command of Regz Williams, was shortly after reinforced by a second under the Earl of Essex. For three days the port of Havre de Grace was put into the hands of the English Queen.

¹ During the administrations of Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin many illustrious prisoners were suddenly and violently confined at Vincennes.

BOOK VII.

¹ II. Kings ii. v. 11.

² The Gebirs, in Persia, have a separate religion, which they pretend to have been founded by Zoroaster, and which is less foolish than some other human superstitions, its votaries worshipping with secret mysteries the Sun, as the image of the Creator.

³ Instead of a funeral oration over the unfortunate Valois, the panegyric of his assassin was pronounced from the pulpit at Rome. At Paris his portrait was placed on the altar with the sacrament. Cardinal Retz relates that on the day of the Barricades, during the minority of Louis XIV., he saw a citizen wearing a gorget, on which was engraved the figure of the monk, with the inscription "*Saint Jacques Clement !*"

⁴ The only King who obtained the name of father of his people.

⁵ George d'Amboise, deservedly beloved both by his King and country, for he loved and served them both faithfully.

⁶ Trémouille. Among the many great men of this name, the one here alluded to is Guy de la Trémouille, surnamed the Valiant, who carried the *oriflamme*, or sacred standard of France, and who refused the sword of Constable under Charles VI.

⁷ The Constable, who saved France under Charles V., conquered Castille, placed Henry de Trastamarre on the throne of Peter of Cruel, and was Constable of France and of Castille.

⁸ Entitled the Knight "without fear and without reproach." Francis I. received the order of knighthood from him at the battle of Marignan. Bayard was killed, in 1523, during the retreat of Rebec, in Italy.

⁹ Joan of Arc, better known by the name of the Maid of Orleans, an inn-servant, born at the village of Domremi-sur-Meuse, who, being endowed with bodily strength and courage beyond her sex, was employed by the Count de Dunois to re-establish the fortunes of Charles VII. She was taken prisoner, during a sally from Compiègne, in 1430, conducted to Rouen, where she was tried and condemned as a witch by an ecclesiastical tribunal, equally ignorant and barbarous, and was burned to death by the English, who should rather have respected her gallantry.

¹⁰ Louis XIII., born in 1601, son of Henry IV. and Mary de Medicis, and father of Louis XIV.

¹¹ Cardinal Mazarin was obliged to quit the kingdom in 1651, in spite of the great influence which he had obtained over the Queen-Regent; but Cardinal Richelieu maintained himself successfully against all enemies, and even against the King himself, who was disgusted with him.

¹² The people—that blind and ferocious monster—so detested the great Colbert that they wished to disinter his body; but the voice of good sense, which prevails in the long run, has rendered his memory for ever dear and respectable.

¹³ Louis XIV., grandson of Henry IV., born 5th September, 1638, succeeded his father in 1643, and died in 1715, after a reign of seventy-two years.

¹⁴ The Academy of Sciences.

¹⁵ Louis de Bourbon, commonly called the Great Condé, and Henry Vicomte de Turenne, have been considered the greatest generals of their age: both gained great victories, and both acquired glory even in defeat. The genius of Condé appeared more adapted for a day of battle, that of Turenne for a campaign. Turenne obtained some advantages in war over Condé when they came to be opposed to each other: but who will decide which was the greater man? Condé died in 1688, at the age of sixty-six. Turenne was killed by a cannon-shot while directing the construction of a battery against the Germans at Salsbac, in 1675. He was buried at St. Denis with great honours.

¹⁶ Marshal de Catinat. He gained the battles of Staffarde and Marsaille, and afterwards obeyed without a murmur the Marshal de Villeroi, who sent him orders without consulting him. He left his command without remonstrance, never complained of any one, never requested anything from the King, and died, like a philosopher, in a small country house at St. Gratien, without having augmented in the least his original fortune, and without having for a moment belied his character for moderation.

¹⁷ Marshal de Vauban, the greatest military engineer that ever lived: he fortified after his new method 800 old places, built 88 fortresses, conducted 53 sieges, and was present at 140 actions: he left behind him 12 manuscript volumes, full of projects for the good of the state, not one of which has yet been carried into execution. He was a member of the Academy of Sciences, and did it more honour than any one else, in employing mathematics to the service and advantage of his country.

¹⁸ Francis Henry de Montmorency (who took the name of Luxemburg), Marshal of France, Duke and Peer, gained the battle of Cassel, under the orders of Monsieur, brother of Louis XIV., commanded in chief at the famous victories of Mons, Fleurus, Steinkerkue and Nerwind, conquered provinces for the King, was sent to the Bastille, and received many mortifications from the Government.

¹⁹ He gained the battles of Fredelinguen and the first Hochstet. It is worthy of remark that in the latter he occupied the same ground where the Duke of Marlborough afterwards posted himself, when he gained, over other generals, the great victory of the second Hochstet, or Blenheim, so fatal to France. Having afterwards resumed the command, Villars fought the famous battle of Malplaquet, where the enemy lost 20,000 men, and which was only lost when the Marshal's wounds compelled him to leave the field. In 1712, when the enemies menaced a march to Paris, and it was deliberated whether Louis XIV. should quit Versailles, Villars defeated Prince Eugene at Denain, possessed himself of the enemy's dépôt at Marchiennes, raised the siege of Landrecy, took Douay, Quesnoy, Bouchain, unconditionally, and afterwards made peace at Rastadt, with the same Prince Eugene, the plenipotentiary of the Emperor.

²⁰ Louis, Duke of Burgundy, grandson of Louis XIV. and father of Louis XV., died in 1712, aged 30. His wife, Marie Adelaide of Savoy, died a few days before him, and their eldest son, the Duke of Brittany, a few days after.

²¹ Louis XV. was only five years old at the death of his great grandfather: he was educated by the mild and prudent Cardinal de Fleury, who was also Prime Minister during the first years of this reign.

²² A true portrait of Philip, Duke of Orleans and Regent of the kingdom, during the minority of Louis XV.

²³ Charles II. of Spain, being without issue, left his kingdom by will to Philip of Anjou (brother of the above-mentioned Duke of Burgundy), who, on the death of the Emperor, in 1700, possessed himself of the throne; but, at the time when this was written, the accession of the house of Bourbon seemed to promise little advantage to France, which was then at issue with Spain.

BOOK VIII.

¹ He caused himself to be declared, by that portion of the Parliament which remained faithful to his interests, Lieutenant-General of the State and Kingdom of France.

² BRISSAC. He threw himself into the arms of the League out of anger against Henry III., who had said that "he was neither good on shore or at sea." He afterwards negotiated secretly with Henry IV., and opened to him the gates of Paris, obtaining for his reward the staff of a Marshal of France.—SAINT PAUL. A soldier of fortune, made a Marshal by the Duke of Mayenne, a passionate and very violent man, afterwards killed by the Duke of Guise, son of *le Balafre*.—LA CHATRE. One of the Marshals of the League, who were called Bastards, who would one day be legitimated at their father's expense. In fact, la Châtre afterwards made his peace with Henry, who then confirmed him in the dignity of Marshal of France.

³ The Comte d'Egmont, son of the Admiral d'Egmont, who was beheaded at Brussels along with Count Horn. The son, continuing faithful to the cause of Philip II. King of Spain, was sent to the assistance of the Duke of Mayenne at the head of 1800 lances. At his entry into Paris he received the congratulations of the town. The orator having introduced some compliment about the Admiral, his father, "*Do not mention him*," interrupted the Count, "*he deserved his death, for he was a rebel*."

⁴ The battle of Ivry was fought on the 14th March, 1590, in a plain between these two rivers.

⁵ Marshal of France, who conspicuously distinguished himself at the battle of Ivry. He served under five Kings of France.

⁶ Henry Gontaud de Biron, Marshal of France, Grand Master of the Ordnance, a great soldier: he commanded the reserve at Ivry, and contributed much to the success of the day by moving forward at the right time against the enemy. After the victory he said to Henry the Great, "*Sire, you have done what Biron should have done, and Biron what his King should have done*." He was killed by a cannon-ball at the siege of Eprenay, in 1592.

⁷ Charles Gontaud de Biron, Marshal, Duke, and Peer: he afterwards conspired against Henry IV., and was beheaded in the Bastille in 1602; upon the destruction of that prison, the ironwork of the scaffold on which he suffered was still visible.

⁸ ROUEN, afterwards Duke of Sully, Superintendent of the Finances, Grand Master of the Ordnance, and Marshal of France, after the death of Henry IV., received seven wounds at the battle of Ivry.—NANGIS. A man of great merit and true virtue: he

advised Henry III. against the assassination of the Duke de Guise, recommending him boldly to try him by the law.

* Henry de la Tour d'Orliques, Viscount Turenne, Marshal of France. Henry IV. gave him Charlotte de la Marck, Princess of Sedan, in marriage. On his wedding night he took Stenay by assault. The sovereignty thus acquired was lost by his son, Frederic Maurice Duke de Bouillon, who, having engaged in Cinq Mars' conspiracy against Richelieu, was obliged to give up Sedan to save his life: he, however, received in exchange extensive domains that were more profitable in mere revenue, but which were accompanied with less power.

¹⁰ **LENDIGUIERES.** He commenced his career as a private soldier, and ended it in the office of Constable under Louis XIII.—**CLERMONT.** Balsac de Clermont d'Entragues, killed at the battle of Ivry.—**DE NESLE, FREQUIERES.** Captains of fifty men at arms, both killed in this battle.—**TRÉMOUILLE.** Claude, Duke de la Trémoille, was present at Ivry. He was a man of great courage and a boundless ambition, very wealthy, and the most considerable noble of the Calvinist party. He died at the age of thirty-eight.

¹¹ The exact words used by Henry IV. on the day of Ivry were as follows:—" *Rally to my white plume; you will always see it in the path of honour and glory.*"

¹² The bayonet, which derives its name from Bayonne, where they were first made.

¹³ Duplessis-Mornay had two horses killed under him in this battle. He really had all the *sang froid* in action which is here so praised.

¹⁴ Biron was wounded at Ivry; but it was in the action at Fontaine-Francaise that Henry the Great saved his life.

¹⁵ It was not at Ivry, but in a skirmish at Aumale that the King was wounded: he afterwards generously placed in his guards the soldier that had wounded him. Although not wounded at Ivry, Henry's life was, nevertheless, in great danger: he was at one time surrounded by three Dutch squadrons, and would have perished there had he not been disengaged by Marshal d'Aumont and the Duke de la Trémoille. His friends even thought him dead for some time, and when they saw him return, sword in hand, and covered with the blood of his enemies, they hailed his deliverance with great cries of joy.

BOOK IX.

¹ This description of the Temple of Love and the personification of that passion here given—not as the son of Venus and the God of fable, but with all its train of pleasures and disorders—are entirely allegorical. The scene is placed in Cyprus, as the abode of policy was in Rome, for the Cyprians have in all times been known as altogether given up to Love, even as the Court of Rome has long been considered the most politic in Europe.

² Near Gordes, in Provence, celebrated by the sojourn of Petrarch in its neighbourhood, and by his passion for the beautiful Laura, to whom he consecrated his Muse. A house is still shown near the stream as that where Petrarch lived.

³ Anet was built by Henry II. for his mistress Diane de Potiers, of whose initials, variously arranged, the whole of the ornaments of this castle (situated in the neighbourhood of Ivry) were formed, and whence the place was long called Dianet. This lady lived till the age of eighty, and her tomb is still shown in the chapel of Anet.

* Gabrielle d'Estrée, of an ancient family in Picardy, married to the Seigneur de Liancourt, and afterwards created Duchess de Beaufort, &c. Henry IV. fell in love with her during the Civil Wars: he sometimes stole away from camp to visit her: once he was near being taken by the enemy as he passed through their pickets in the disguise of a peasant.

* Cleopatra, on her way to Tarsus, where Antony had summoned her, travelled in a magnificent galley, glittering with gold and adorned with the finest paintings; the sails were of purple, the cordage of silk and gold. Cleopatra was dressed as the Goddess Venus: her women represented the Nymphs and Graces: the prow and the stern were filled with most beautiful children disguised as Loves. In this equipage she sailed down the river Cydnus to the sound of many instruments of music. All the people of Tarsus took her for the Goddess she represented, and quitted the tribunal of Antony to run before her in admiring crowds: that Roman himself went to receive her, and became desperately enamoured of her.

BOOK X.

¹ I. Samuel v. 2, 3.

* The Chevalier d'Aumale was killed about this time at St. Denis, and his death much weakened the party of the League. His duel with the Viscount de Turenne is only a fiction; but such single combats were still common at that period. A celebrated affair of the kind took place between the Sieur de Marivaux, a Royalist, and the Sieur Claude de Marolles, who held to the League. They met behind the Carthusian convent, in Paris, on the same day that Henry III. was assassinated, and fought there in presence of the people and the army: Marolles was the conqueror.

* Henry IV. blockaded Paris in 1590 with less than 20,000 men.

* The ambassador of Spain to the League advised that bread should be made from the bones of the dead: his counsel was carried into effect, and only served to hasten the deaths of many thousand people.

* When the houses of the clergy and the convents were visited, they were all, even that of the Capuchins, found provided for more than a year.

* Cotemporary historians relate that the most frightful excesses were committed by the Swiss in the pay of the Duke de Mayenne: it is to them alone that these lines apply, and not to their nation generally, which, full of good sense and integrity, is one of the most respectable in the world, and which is occupied only in preserving its own liberties, and never in oppressing those of others.

* This story is told in all the memoirs of the time. Similar horrors happened also at the siege of Sancerre.

* Such was the generosity of Henry IV., that he permitted his officers to send provisions to their friends within the town: the soldiers followed their example. He also allowed all who chose to quit Paris. Thus the besiegers really fed the besieged.

* The entry of Henry IV. into Paris did not take place until March, 1594. He had embraced the Catholic faith in 1593.

ANTHOLOGY.

[The poems that follow are, chiefly, translations from Italian authors; there are also some from French, German, and Latin sources. I can only make this general acknowledgment, as, in most cases, I cannot with certainty name the originals.]

ANTHOLOGY.

COUNTRY LIFE.

*"Beatus ille qui procul negotiis
Paterna rura bobus exercet suis," &c.*

How happy in his humble lot,
Who, void of care, unvext by gold,
With his own oxen tills the field
His virtuous fathers till'd of old;

Him nor the trumpet's stirring call,
Nor Ocean's bosom white with foam,
Nor the loud city's pomp and crowds
Can tempt to leave his quiet home;

There round the elm his careful hand
Teaches the tender vine to grow,
Or, the rank sucker prun'd away,
Grafts, in its stead, the fruitful bough;

Now turns he where in some fair vale
His lowing herds in peace extend;
Now pours the mead in cooling jars,
Now shears his sheep which lowly bend

When mellow Autumn rears his head,
And corn and fruit his reign declare,
He joys to pluck the bursting grape,
Or cull at ease the melting pear;

How soothes it then, at glowing noon,
 To seek the cool grove's guarding shade,
 Or calmly rest, at balmy eve,
 Upon the greensward, musing, laid;

There, gliding 'tween its flow'ry banks,
 A clear stream murmurs by his feet,
 And gentle birds with music near
 Invite the frame to slumbers sweet.

But, when stern Winter's angry blast
 Moans thro' the wood, and falling snows
 Hide the green plain, with hound and horn,
 To chase the tusked boar he goes;

Or spreads with anxious art the net
 Whose mesh the hungry lark shall snare;
 Whose subtle tangles deftly check
 The fleet foot of the startled hare.

Who would recal, 'mid such pure joys,
 The slights of love, the ills of life;
 But if, this bliss to share, there be
 Fair children and a modest wife,

Who, tho' the sun's rude kiss hath tinged
 Her cheek with brown, shall gladly come,
 The fire new trimm'd, the meal prepar'd,
 To breathe her wanderer's welcome home;

Whose care first safely pens his fold,
 Then, by the clear hearth's cheerful blaze,
 Of sober milk and homely wine,
 Her plain, yet priceless, store displays:

If *such* there be, the costliest fare,
 The choicest produce of the field,

All wealth can buy, or luxury boast,
 Less happiness to me would yield;

To please the eye or woo the taste
 Such still be found on Pleasure's board,
 Mine be the simpler, sweeter meal,
 My fruitful trees, my plains afford.

At the soft close of summer day,
 If, from my jasmine porch, I see,
 To the light sound of the village pipe
 My children dancing merrily,

Or round my hearth, at wintry eve,—
 Content our sober feast to cheer—
 Each young face eloquent of joy,
 The song, the tale, the jest to hear,

I ask no more ; these be *my* joy,
 Of want no fear, no thirst of wealth,
 To me the Gods are amply kind,
 If mine be quiet, love and health.

Rare blessings! which too oft mankind
 Forget, forsake, despise, destroy,
 Though, wanting these, life's but a load,
 Their wealth a curse, a dream their joy;

Rare blessings! for which night and morn
 To Heav'n my thanks, my pray'rs ascend;
 My thanks—that they *have* cheer'd my path;
 My pray'rs—that they will *still* befriend.

Thus, in approving conscience blest,
 Rich in mine unfelt poverty,
 As I have happy, humble liv'd,
 So let me happy, humble die!

THE RAPE OF PROSERPINE.

SHRIEKING she cast the flow'rs away—and where
 That rude hand clasp'd, imploring turn'd her face;
 Then, aw'd at the wild glance which met her there,
 Sank, mute and moveless, in his stern embrace;
 O'er her the God, his warm lips shagg'd with hair,
 Bends, in lewd wonder at her maiden grace,
 Then on her damask cheek and bosom fair
 His greedy kisses leave their black'ning trace.
 Cold in his clinging arms she lies, and pale;
 One hand that dread detested face keeps back,
 And one she holds before her quivering eyes:
 Too late—the flaming car moves on—the skies
 A deep sound rends—'tis helpless woman's wail
 Mix'd with the clattering wheels, the clanging whip's
 shrill crack.

THE DEATH OF DIDO.

“RELICS of love, while Heav'n so will'd it, rise
 With sweets to me, receive my poor remains;
 Free my tir'd spirit from its fleshly chains:
 End, end at once, my hapless love and life.
 I liv'd a Queen, the great Sichaus' wife;
 Carthage I built swarth Lybia which restrains;
 Half by my flight of his revenge and gains
 Foiling a greedy brother's murderous knife,
 Happy, ah! happy, had I only known
 My door to yon false Trojan to deny,
 Sav'd but from death my comfort to destroy.
 What rests yet to suffice that heart of stone?
 My blood? 'tis his”—Wild ceas'd she, and quick prest
 The dear lov'd traitor's sword deep in her frenzied breast.

THE RAPE OF LUCRECE*

I.

" VAINLY thou strugglest: the firm heart and true
 Shall nought avail: be cold and difficult still,
 Or take thy death or yield thee to my will"—
 Hot Tarquin spake and flash'd his blade in view.
 " Nor this alone: by thee a slave shall lie,
 Slain by my hand, as caught in chastest love
 With fair Lucrece." Deep groan'd she, and to Jove
 One last pray'r breath'd. Jove heard not her vain cry.
 Where in her maddening shame and mortal need,
 Her refuge then? Self-slain, and bath'd in gore,
 Lust's victim lies. Rash counsel and wrong deed!
 To yield to crime, *then* die? There needed more.
 Better to die than sin. Mistaken, she
 Deem'd it enough to seem not virtuous be.

II.

What could she more, unfortunate, alone,
 The spouse of Collatine, in her sad strait?
 She wept, she pray'd—her pray'r was all too late,
 All vainly in her eye the bright tear shone.
 Bent the sharp death her ivory bosom o'er,
 As o'er the shrinking dove the greedhawk bends:
 Without assistance, or advice of friends,
 Unfortunate, alone, what could she more?
 True: Virtue bids us death to sin prefer:
 But when her best blood the swift blade let fall,
 Say, what the fault which then she had in her?
 By her unshar'd, the crime was Tarquin's all,
 Its victim she. In this alone her guilt,
 Spilling her own that innocent blood she spilt.

* Something of the same argument is pursued in Sonnet 224 of Petrarch. In the first tercet of Sonnet 222 he also refers to Lucretia. See pages 188, 4.

ON THE BIRTH AND DEATH OF VIRGIL.

YE happy swans, who guard the verdant shore
 And the clear stream of fortunate Mincio, say,
 If it be true, that, 'mid your haunts, of yore
 Great Virgil first beheld the light of day?
 And, Sirens, ye, his song who echoing bore,
 With whom his calm life clos'd, tell me—and may,
 As ye tell true, peace be yours evermore—
 If in your arms he sigh'd his soul away?
 What greater grace could man from fortune have?
 What end was ever to such birth so meet?
 When were so like the cradle and the grave?
 That, being born amid the warblings sweet
 Of snowy swans, the bard should sink to sleep,
 Mourn'd by fond Sirens of the glassy deep.

EPAMINONDAS.

I SEE before me a red battle-field,
 From whose more desperate and tumultuous strife
 My sick eye gladly turns to one far spot,
 A small sole tent, where, pierc'd with numerous wounds,
 His country's hope, Epaminondas lies.
 Deep in his breast the fatal javelin hides,
 Whose barb withdrawn—so the wise leech has spoken—
 Shall instantly let out the little life.
 Faint, breathless, while his weeping friends stand round,
 He first demands his shield, which, finding safe,
 He beckons to bring near and kisses it.
 Eagerly then he asks, and with keen eye
 On the scarr'd soldier turns, who propp'd his head,
 "*Whose is the victory? Ours. THEN ALL IS WELL!*"
 When, of his friends, some mourn his early fall,
 And that he left no children to preserve

His memory—what the mild rebuke, his proud reply?

“ *Not childless is my race; I leave behind*

Leuctra and Mantinea daughters fair:

These to posterity shall bear my name.”

—The patriot Theban spake, and from his breast

Himself the javelin drew, and, smiling, died.

SONNETS ON ITALY.

I.

PROUD nurse of noble sons! whom happier years
 Saw in their course of conquest sweep the earth:
 Fair temple once of peace and innocent mirth,
 As now of discord sad and ceaseless tears;
 How can I hear thy piteous cries, and not
 Mourn, and how see, nor deepest sorrow show,
 Thine empire, once so mighty, fall'n so low,
 Thy trophies vanish'd and thy pow'r forgot?
 Thus sunk, such majesty is left e'en now,
 So strong thy name still sounds on my heart's core,
 That e'en thy ruins, kneeling, I adore:
 What had it been when, proud in honours, thou
 Sat'st queen-like here, thy reverend tresses crown'd
 With gold and jewels, flashing glory round?

II.

From the deep sleep, which sunk as in the grave,
 Bound thee so long, awake and breathe at last,
 And o'er thy wounds thine eye indignant cast,
 O mine Italia! fool alike and slave;
 Wake, seek, and sigh for thy fair freedom ta'en,
 For ever, for thine own misdeeds, away;
 And from the tortuous path, too long where stay
 Thine erring steps, the right road strive to gain,

If yet thou dar'st peruse past History's page,
 Thence wilt thou learn that they thy triumphs grac'd,
 Who now on thee the yoke and chain have plac'd;
 Wicked desires, weak counsels, civil rage,
 Such to this wretched end have sunk thee down,
 For thy deep grief and shame, for thy proud foe's renown.

III.

Where is thine arm, Italia? why dost thou
 Trust the false stranger? fierce, alike, to me
 And fatal seem thy friends and foes to be;
 Both once obey'd thee, both oppress thee now.
 Thus then thy honour, thus the fame's pure glow
 Of thy once mighty empire keep'st thou free?
 Thus to the ancient valour, which to thee
 Vow'd its dear faith, is kept thine idle vow.
 Aye, go! divorce thy pristine worth! unite
 With sloth, 'mid blood and groans sleep undismay'd!
 Supinely sleep on ruin's tottering height!
 Sleep, vile Adulteress, till the thirsty blade
 Avenging wake thee, in thy luxury's night,
 Naked and shameless by thy wanton laid!

IV.

Italia, my Italia, thou who hast
 The unhappy gift of beauty, from which flows
 A fatal dowry of unnumber'd woes
 O'er thy sweet brow by shame and sorrow cast:
 O. that thou wert more strong, or else less fair,
 That those who on thy charms now fondly dote,
 And falsely now those charms to death devote,
 Less fondness or more fear for thee might bear.
 I should not then see these arm'd torrents pour'd
 Down the tall Alp, nor view Po's tranquil wave
 Red with our blood revive the Gallic horde:
 Nor, doubtful of thy children, hear thee crave
 The dangerous succour of the stranger's sword—
 Victor or vanquish'd, still alike a slave.

ROME.

SHE, who so wide and far in older times
 The conquering arms of her proud empire threw,
 Mistress of many states, and of the true
 Virtue which to the height of glory climbs,
 Lies a vile slave herself, nor hopes to end
 The wrongs which German hate and grasping Spain
 Doom her to bear, while still she calls in vain
 Her deaf saints to deliver and defend;
 And thus, her glory fallen to the ground,
 Of her old lofty valour reft and lorn,
 She stands the butt of fate, the sign of scorn.
 Canst thou, my friend, hear without shame profound,
 What with fast tears and mantling shame I tell,
 Nor feel, like me, thy breast with patriot passion swell?

VENICE.

WHERE now proud palaces are clustering seen,
 Where marble, gold and purple richly glance,
 Low huts once stood, together group'd by chance,
 On desert shores and islands rude and mean,
 Peopled by a bold virtuous nation, who
 From the near ocean drew their simple fare,
 Together met for mutual safety there,
 Slavery to shun, not kingdoms to subdue.
 Ambition vex'd not then the humble breast:
 Taught falsehood worse in hate than death to hold,
 They knew nor pride nor the vile thirst of gold.
 May Heav'n, who gives her now a lot more blest
 Grant that these virtues which I honour so
 May ne'er from her new wealth change or corruption know.

THE SIEGE OF GENOA, 1684.

"MY Genoa! if here with tearless eye
 I mark thy lovely form thus shrunk and spoil'd,
 'Tis that I will not shame thee with a sigh,
 Not dearth of love in thy ungrateful child.
 I read thy constancy and counsel high
 In the majestic ruins round me pil'd;
 Where'er I turn, the proudest proofs I spy
 How well against thy fate thy valour toil'd.
 Bright sufferings greater fame than victory make!
 Well was thy vengeance on the foe display'd!
 He saw thee fall'n, yet felt thee unsubdu'd!
 —Thus saw I her glad course fair Freedom take,
 Kissing each ruin, as she proudly said,
 "*Aye, welcome Death, but never servitude.*"

THE CHAMBER OF PETRARCH AT ARQUA.

ROOM! which once held'st within thy narrow girth
 Him whose great fame nor space can bound, nor time,
 Of Love the master, graceful and sublime,
 By whom, with heav'nly honour, while on earth,
 Was Laura crown'd; dear, solitary spot!
 What sweet sad thoughts, of pride, of pain, arise,
 What tears of shame and joy o'erflow my eyes
 To find thee thus forsaken and forgot.
 Agate, and precious jasper, and fine gold
 Were fitter monuments his dust to hold,
 Yet scarcely worthy the rich prize to claim.
 —But no: go deck with baubles the vain monarch's tomb,
 Gems for the brow where laurels will not bloom,
 Sufficeth here the Poet's deathless name.

THE TOMB OF ALFIERI.

STOP! in this sacred tomb whose ashes lie?
 Faithful to truth, what hand has known to seize
 The features of our modern Sophocles,
 Ausonia's long-fall'n lyre who raised so high?
 Behold the marble, which Heav'n's self endues
 With pow'r and grace, surpassing all the rest
 Which, of sublime or beauteous, e'er exprest
 Italian chisel or Italian muse.
 Shake off, my country, thine old grief at last;
 The fame, which this great trophy sheds on thee,
 Sham'd by no sigh, no lingering tear should be;
 The insults are avenged of ages past,
 While to the stranger this fair wonder cries,
 Here wrought Canova, here Alfieri lies.

THE MOSES OF CANOVA.

WHAT'S He, who, sculptur'd from yon block immense,
 Majestic sits, leaving behind him far
 The proudest boasts of art, with lips which are
 So quick and prompt that words seem flashing thence?
 'Tis Moses, by the chin's grey honours known,
 By the mild piercing eye, and brow of flame;
 'Tis Moses, such as from the mount he came,
 While still upon his face God's glory shone;
 Such was he, thro' the vast and sounding wave
 With Israel when he march'd, such too when he
 Beckon'd the flood where Egypt found her grave.
 Yet Ye, his charge, to false Gods bent the knee!
 Why then some image rais'd ye not like this?
 Such to adore had scarcely seem'd amiss.

LINES WRITTEN IN THE GULF OF BAIA, NEAR
NAPLES.

SEEST thou yon wave whose placid flow
Steals on the pebbled shore to meet?
Seest thou the zephyrs sweet
That gently ruffle as they blow,
The waters which they love to greet?
Then mount our bark, nor longer rest,
My careful hand its course shall guide;
Danger will give our joy a zest
As o'er the lonely bay we glide.

Behind us fades the distant land;
While with weak trembling hand
'Tis thine the docile oar to ply,
Bent 'neath the struggling helm, I trace
O'er the green Ocean's troubled face
Our foaming pathway rapidly.

What freshness breathes adown the wind!
Sunk 'neath the western sea, his light
The gorgeous sun hath now resigned
To the pale queen of night;
The half-closed flow'rs, that drooping lay,
'Neath his hot kiss, their charms display,
And breathe a fragrance on the breeze,
While the light gale of Even blowing,
Around their sweetest perfume throwing,
Embalms the earth, the sky and seas.

Along the shore what music floats,
Or dies along the tranquil main;
Echo prolongs the notes,
And joins them in a mellowed strain.
Mistrustful of the clouded skies
The fisher folds his net, and hies

To where his own dear hearth-lights burn,
 Where with loud cry and close caress
 His playful children round him press,
 And greet their father's glad return.

But falling now a thicker shade
 Spreads deeper gloom across the main;
 The sounds expire, the dim shores fade,
 And silence holds her reign.
 It is the soft, the balmy hour,
 When bow'd 'neath Melancholy's pow'r
 The mind in pensive dreams recalls
 The works and worth of other days,
 And sees as on those hills we gaze
 Their ruin'd fanes and crumbling halls.

O Holy land, fair Freedom's ancient shrine,
 For noble virtuous deeds so fam'd of yore!
 Now are weak sons and worthless Cæsars thine,
 Fall'n is thy state! thy heroes are no more!
 Yet haply here the ardent soul might feel
 E'en from the grave their spirit o'er him steal,
 As in some time-worn fane the mind recalls
 The God once worshipped in its mould'ring walls.

Sweet Hill of Baia! Poesy's fair seat,
 With thy luxuriant vale, where wont to meet
 All that of old were great, good, wise,
 Not now of love or glory the retreat,
 No sound, no voice to mine replies,
 Nought but the lone sea's rippling noise,
 Which thine old walls in mockery repeat.

Thus passes all—thus shall we pass
 In turn away—nor leave, alas!
 More trace than leaves our light bark on the main;
 Soon the slight ruffle sinks and all is calm again.

"LA GARDE MEURT, ELLE NE SE REND PAS."

THE sons of victory are no more;
Their struggles and *our* hopes are o'er,
 —Weep, Gallia! weep, thy glory's stay,
 Quickly with them has past away.
 Our foemen well their valour knew,
 And, knowing, paid the homage due,
 Kindly, but vainly, sought to save
 The last poor remnant of the brave:
 Our gallant sons with one loud cry
 Went dashing on, "the guard *may* die,
 But never yield to slavery."

And thou, proud chief, who twice to them
 Hast ow'd thy bloodstain'd diadem,
 Thou, who, without their generous aid,
 In hostile chains hadst groaning laid,
 Napoleon! in that last sad hour,
 When perish'd Gallia's pride and pow'r,
 Say, wert thou with them charging there,
 Triumph to merit, death to dare?
 —Life nothing prizing, freedom fled,
 For thee our heroes fought and bled;
 While thou, in frenzy and affright,
 Didst turn thee from the glorious fight,
 Deaf to their noble patriot cry
 Which fill'd the air, "the guard *may die*,
 But never yield to slavery."

Alone against a hostile world,
 My country, was thy flag unfurl'd,
 Thy flag, which o'er so many a field
 Conquering had flown, was forc'd to yield,
 Not that thy sons were grown less true,
 Or e'en that numbers overthrew.

Not always victory to the strong
 Or to the swift the race belong:
 And when just Heav'n its smile withdraws
 Success deserts the erring cause.
 Our fault was this, too long deceived,
 And faithful still, we still believed,
 Our safety, freedom, strength to be,
 Napoleon, fatal trust! in thee.
 Europe for this in anger rose
 And our old slaves stood forth our foes;
 Monarchs in league thy haught crest bow'd
 France, who in conquest wert too proud;
 And now thou striv'st, but O 'tis vain
 To rend their galling bonds in twain;
 Not yet the strong detested yoke
 Rear'd by thy victors can be broke,
 Not yet the curse of despot pow'r
 Be shaken off; but when the hour
 Shall come—and come it will—at last,
 Dearer for all our sufferings past,
 Then, brethren, rally at the cry,
 Your slogan old, "the guard may die,
 But *never* yield to slavery."

INNOCENCE STRUGGLING AGAINST FATE.

As ploughs a ship the stormy main,
 With cordage rent and shatter'd sail
 The sea so rude, so dark the heaven
 And fierce the blast, hope, courage fail—
 Where Fortune wills at random driven,
 E'en so am I compell'd to bend;
 Of friends, of fame I stand bereft,
 No help or hope to save me left;
 Ev'n innocence with me is vain,
 And bears me swifter to mine end.

THE MIDNIGHT REVIEW.

At midnight, from his tomb,
 The drummer wakes and walks;
 And beating loud the drum
 To each swarming barrack stalks.

Their old art recalling still,
 His fleshless fingers beat,
 With a fearful skill
 Reveillé, rally, or retreat.

Strangely the sounds and strong
 On the cold night's silence break;
 And soldiers perish'd long
 From each festering grave awake.

Those who, ice and snow beneath,
 Stiffening lay in the far north;
 These who found alike their death
 In Italy's hot earth.

Who sleep beneath the slime of Nile,
 Or Araby's vast sands;
 —All leave their sepulchres awhile,
 And all have weapons in their hands.

And at midnight too awakes
 From his tomb the trumpeteer;
 Quick his charger tried he takes,
 And sounds loud, long, and clear.

Then, of veteran cavaliers,
 With old wounds which newly bleed,
 Troop after troop appears,
 Mounted each on airy steed.

Their grey heads, 'neath each helm loose tied,
 Grimly shake; and fiercely wave

Their skeleton hands from side to side
The long and trenchant glaive.

And at midnight, too, awakes
From his tomb their Chief again;
Slow his way and firm he makes
Girded by a gallant train.

Small the hat he wears;
Plain garments wrap his form;
And at the left side he bears
A small short sword, his only arm.

The moon, thro' clouds, lurid and wan
Lighted the spectre crew,
As by a motionless flag THE MAN
Stopp'd that strange army to review.

First the changing ranks present,
And next their weapons shoulder'd bore;
At beat of drum then filing went
Their silent Chief before.

Of his Captains, slow the Chief,
The trusty circle nears;
To one he stoops and whispers brief,
Whispers and disappears.

France was the word he spoke;
—Along the banks of Seine
The accents swell'd—and woke
What echo? ST. HELENE!

To our fields, so-call'd, of Bliss,*
Go at midnight murk and cold,
Solemn stern review like this
Will you see dead Cæsar hold.

* *Champs Elysées*, the locale of the supposed review.

THE ABBEY.

How sweet! when evening's solitary star,
 Ushering modestly night's silent car,
 Slow on its course thro' Heav'n's grey vault ascends,
 And darkness o'er the earth with day contends;
 How sweet! to bend, o'er the deserted plain,
 Our reverent footsteps to that rustic fane,
 Where, though its simple threshold rarely trod
 The moss impede, yet speaks to virtue God.
 Hail! thou dark cypress, hail! funereal glooms,
 Hail! holy walls which gird our village tombs;
 I bless each simple stone by which I tread;
 Evil to him who would profane the dead!
 Before each humble grave my knee has bent,
 And to my step the nave its echoes sent:
 What gloom! what silence! dimly on the sight
 Sends thro' the cloister'd shades its trembling light
 The single lamp, which, while the tir'd world sleeps,
 Still near the holy shrine its lone watch keeps,
 Consoling emblem of that pitying eye
 Which beams on man with ceaseless love from high.

—Advance: no sound upon my strain'd ear falls;
 The court is clear'd; alone, ye sacred walls,
 I stand amid you; here my harass'd soul
 Its griefs, its love may breathe without control,
 Trusting to Heav'n that secret, which, alone
 Should be by it receiv'd, to you made known.

But—*can* I, can I with *such* thoughts draw near
 This awful spot without a secret fear;
 Can I, great God! to thy pure altar dare,
 Burning with love and grief this heart to bear,
 Nor tremble that thine holy majesty
 Should vindicate the reverence due to thee—
 Yes; for I blush not for the flame I nurse
 That love is pure which springs from virtue's source,
 Pure e'en as her to whom its hopes aspire,
 in my bosom burns a sacred fire.

Faith honours—time confirms—misfortunes prove
 To Earth, to Heav'n, my great, my deathless love:
 So dread I naught, Almighty Lord! before
 Thy throne of grace, the passionate tale to pour;
 Despite the awe which here should chill my frame,
 My fond lips fearless dwell on Ellen's name,
 Which, like some sleepless spirit's plaintive wail,
 From tomb to tomb borne on the midnight gale,
 Breaks the dead silence which should here alone prevail.

Ye cold mute tombs, ye hallowed shades, farewell!

Night's echo thrice the growing hour has told,
 Since first before the shrine my hot tears fell;

But Heav'n has seen them and I go consol'd.
 —Haply, e'en now, alone in thoughts of me,
 On other shore may Ellen musing be,
 Or at some gloomy temple's desolate shrine,
 Telling to Heav'n *her* griefs with tears like mine.

ON HAPPINESS.

If from the speaking brow were known
 The inward ills 'neath which we groan,
 How often pity would be due
 Where hate and envy now pursue.
 Within himself we then should know
 That man contains his direst foe,
 That all his joy is this at best,
 He *seems* to others to be blest.

II.

If happiness alone were Man's desire
 The courted bliss how soon might he acquire!
 That gain'd, does it appease his aching breast?
 —He wishes to be happier than the rest;
 But vain the aim; such hope itself defeats;
 His erring estimate the fond search cheats;
 In this the fault that he himself deceives,
 And happier than they are mankind believes.

THE SENTINEL.

ABOVE our camp her quiet light
 The silver moon at midnight flung,
 When thus a young and gallant knight,
 Leaning upon his stout lance, sung:
 Fly, sweet gale! fly, and o'er the deep,
 Waft my vow to my heart's own land,
 Say, that my sure watch here I keep,
 My sure watch here I keep
 Where Glory and where Love command.

The fight may with the morrow come
 Whose strife shall yield me honours fair;
 Victory must fatal be to some;
 If, lance in hand, I perish there,
 Fly, fly sweet gale! my last fond sigh
 Waft to my own far father-land,
 Say, that her true son here I die,
 Her true son here I die
 Where Glory and where Love command.

HOPE.

HOPE is indeed a sweet sweet thing,
 It stills our pain, it soothes our care,
 But, tell me, Ellen, if Hope bring
 Nought in its train the profit where?
 I own that you are kind, yet fain
 Would have that kindness more, or less:
 Why only to be kind such pain,
 If with hope only you can bless?
 Aye to expect and never end,
 If love its ardour so must spend,
 Death shall my prison ope:
 Vain these cold common smiles of thine!
 Sweet Ellen! in despair we pine
 When we for ever hope.

PUELLÆ.

*" Ut flos in septis secretus nascitur hortis,
 Ignotus pecori, nulloque obtusus aratro,
 Quem mulcent aura, nutrit sol, educat imber,"* &c. &c.

As springs a modest flow'r in some lone mead,
 Where nor the plough offends, nor cattle feed,
 The soft gales fan, the sun matures its bed,
 And gentle show'rs revive its drooping head;
 Kiss'd by fresh dew, cool'd by light zephyr's wing,
 New charms each day the fostering seasons bring,
 Till, perfect ev'ry grace, it shines reveal'd
 The summer's pride, the glory of the field.
 But ah! by some rude hand if torn away,
 How soon, o'er all that we so lov'd, decay
 Spreads his chill blight: how soon neglected lies
 What so late won all hearts, what charm'd all eyes!
 Its beauty stal'd, hues dimm'd, and fragrance flown,
 Coldly aside the worthless weed is thrown.
 —So blooms the maid, in conscious virtue's pride,
 Beloved and lovely by her mother's side;
 Thence sever'd, *flow'r-like* does she fade and fall,
 Friendless, forsaken, and forgot by all.

PUERI.

*" Ut vidua in nudo vitis quæ nascitur arce
 Nunquam se extollit, nunquam matrem educat uom,"* &c. &c.

As a weak vine, in some unshelter'd field,
 Whose head nor soars, nor fruit whose branches yield,
 Still, prone and profitless, which idly creeps,
 And in the dust its grovelling 'tenor keeps;
 No friendly hand their propless weight to train,
 The spreading boughs, uncar'd by all, remain.

But if some elm be near to guard and guide,
 The peasant tends it to his sheltering side;
 Each glad result from the wise union flows,
 New beauty this, new vigour that bestows,
That the stern prude, who, coldly chaste, remains,
 No friend her course directs, her steps sustains—
This the sage maid whom Love's soft fetters tie,
 Alike her parent's pride, her husband's joy.

WOMAN.

WHEN Adam first the all-beauteous Eve beheld,
 His own, Heaven-sent, his solitude to cheer,
 Great love their mutual bosoms instant swell'd,
 She kind to him as he to her was dear;
 If to hope faith in Woman be not vain,
 That fame, in Eden, sure she then had won;
 How could she otherwise than true remain,
 To tempt and try her, when she had but *one*?
 Fool! *when* was Nature cheated of her due?
 Adam was comely, vigorous, and young,
 Brave, gentle, quick of wit, in love most true;
 Yet liked she better, though a Devil's tongue
 The flattery spoke, to listen, than forget
 Woman's first latest lesson—to coquet.

ON LEAVING FRANCE.

— THOUGH much has vex'd, it soothes me that, where'er
 From state to state I roam, from fair to fair,
 Not e'en in jest has my free heart and proud
 To woo these Gallic damsels ever bow'd;
 Nay more, has spurn'd their smiles, more pleas'd indeed
 To fail with others than with them succeed;
 Manners, which, haughty and affected, show
 The natural filth of the weak heart below;
 Beauty so little, arrogance so great;
 Between two plastered cheeks a small nose set;

A cold sententiousness which racks the heart;
 Simplicity their boast, their practice art,
 Not e'en a finger ever mov'd by chance;
 Rank flow'rs in a rich vase—such are thy daughters, France!

I.

When Time was young, ere Love from out the breast
 Of primal Chaos drew the slumbering light,
 Earth, sea, and air lay cloak'd in shapeless night,
 And darkness pall'd them in her sable vest:
 E'en so my heavy spirit, by sloth opprest,
 Laid in a dark and sluggish body dight,
 Uncouth, unfashion'd, wanting sense and sight,
 Till thy bright eyes with love my bosom blest.
 Then chang'd my nature; quickening lustre stole
 O'er the dull blank of my long listless soul;
 The sacred flame and most sweet pow'r of love
 With a new life my being did endue;
 Borne on his wing my eager spirit flew
 From grovelling earth to purer worlds above.

II.

As some young fawn—when balmy Spring succeeds
 In smiles and beauty Winter's cheerless reign—
 Forth from his lair at early morning speeds
 To taste the freshness of the dewy plain,
 Bounds in glad freedom over earth, and feeds,
 Alone and thoughtless of the hunter's train,
 Where'er the dictate of his fancy leads,
 By purling rivulet or rich champaign.
 No fears for liberty distract his heart,
 No foe he dreads—but ah! the fateful dart
 Pierces his flank, and bleeding, low he lies.
 Ev'n thus my Mary was *my* April spent;
 Thus, free from care, I follow'd fancy's bent,
 Till the shaft pierc'd me from those killing eyes.

III.

If it be love to bend on earth the sight,
 Seldom and low to speak, yet often sigh,
 Pensive and sad to roam the wild wood by,
 Scorch'd with a fire which ceaseless burns and bright;
 If it be love on fleeting clouds to write,
 To sow on waters, to the breeze to cry,
 To seek for darkness when the day is nigh,
 And look for sunshine with the thickening night,
 To hate each hour of life, for death to pray,
 —If these the tokens are which true love tell,
 Then ah! too sure my spirit owns his sway;
 For such *my* state; in me *those* feelings swell:
 In my heart's heart the unseen wound I feel,
 Which art can never close, nor time shall ever heal.

IV.

With dance and song to chase the lagging hour
 A band of Loves had met; one rosy wight
 Exclaim'd—" *Up, up and take awhile our flight.*"
 " *Where?*" ask'd his mate: " *To our own Ellen's bow'r.*"
 Thus said, as young bees round the sweetest flow'r
 Cluster, they hasten'd to my soul's delight,
 And o'er her downy cheek and forehead white
 And pouting lips, their eager kisses show'r.
 How sweet, my love, thus girt with loves to see!
 Two on her fair brow their arch'd bows applied,
 Two in her bright eyes waved their torches free;
 One, who in vain, both cheek and lip had tried,
 Fell on her breast; thence looking, with sly glee,
 " *Who's better off than I?*" exulting cried.

V.

The sun, the moon, the angels stood around
 The seat of Nature, when, with wonderous hand,
 Lady! in Eden, she thine image plann'd,
 With each rare grace and perfect beauty crown'd.
 The air was calm and soft, clear was the day;
 With Venus Jove exchange'd the approving smile;
 And 'mid the Graces fair Love sat the while,
 Those charms admiring which should spread his sway.
 Thence was thine excellent beauty sent below,
 High Heav'n's eternal model to proclaim,
 Whence all the future fair shall fashion'd be.
 Others may beauteous be of eye, lip, brow,
 Beauteous of face, hands, feet, of finest frame,
 But all are ta'en—where all are join'd—from thee.

VI.

My love in her bright glances conquest bears;
 Whate'er she looks upon becomes more sweet;
 Where'er she passes crowds around her meet;
 Whom she salutes his sinking heart despairs;
 With downcast eyes, to crush the hopeless flame
 He strives, and o'er his imperfection sighs;
 Before her pride grows meek, and anger flies;
 —Aid me, ye fair, her honour to proclaim.
 Each milder wish, each humbler thought, within
 His bosom springs, her gentle voice who hears;
 Nor less her virtues than beauties win.
 And when she smiles, ye Gods! what tongue can say,
 What mind retain, so lovely she appears,
 The kindling charms that o'er her fair face play.

VII.

Aye! here the fount, which, proud that my sweet love
 Sought it so oft, mirror'd her image fair;
 And here the flowery meads where she would rove
 Fresh garlands weaving for her glossy hair;
 Here on the mossy bank she oft reclin'd,
 Here did her light form glide the gay dance thro';
 Here did she smile on me; and here behind
 The gnarl'd oak hide, hide, that *I* only knew;
 Here, by this grot whose mouth the laurels choke,
 Her hand she smiling gave, and kissed my brow,
 So sweet, my spirit feels the thrill e'en now.
 To fount and meadow then, to grot and oak,
 My thanks I render, scatt'ring thus to Heaven,
 Flow'rs of all scent and hue for such great favours given.

VIII.

Oft on my mind returns, in hues which ne'er
 Can from the tablet of my memory
 Be ras'd, the drees, the time, the dear spot where
 'Twas mine my gentle mistress first to see;
 How fair she seem'd, thou Love canst well declare
 Who ever heldst with her sweet company;
 Her winning grace, her mild angelic air
 By speech or fancy, ne'er can equalled be.
 As o'er some lofty mountain peak'd with snow
 Darts the proud sun his bright and burning ray,
 So o'er *her* snowy robe the rich hair fell.
 What boots it here or time or spot to show?
 Where shines an orb so bright 'tis always day,
 And Eden where so fair a form doth dwell.

IX.

Never with flow'r so fair did mortal see
 A stately lily the green mead adorn;
 Never, from jasmine or white rose, was borne
 Fragrance so sweet on summer gale to me.
 As, gentle Lady, fragrant seems to be
 Thy bosom's billowy whiteness, which to scorn
 And shame doth put the freshness of the morn,
 When from his first pure beams Night's cold shades flee.
 Yea! even if the milky way above
 With thy most fair and delicate breast should vie,
 Less clear and stainless would its radiance prove.
 If too it aught, O matchless beauty, I
 Might, by thy kind leave venture to prefer
 My love's devoted purity it were.

X.

Lady, to night those raven tints restore,
 As clouds the moon, which blackly tress thy brow,
 To vermeil morn that young cheek's happy glow,
 Thy lips to the opening rose, and breathe no more
 The rifled fragrance of Arabia's shore:
 Give back thy thousand thefts, nor longer owe
 Those teeth to ivory and that breast to snow;
 Yield to the sun those bright eyes I adore,
 Or let their light, like his, impartial play;
 Smiles, Blushes, Joys, Loves, Graces—which in thee
 So mix and meet that Heaven on earth we see—
 To the else beggar'd Gods, at length, repay,
 And, last worst spoil, unloving love, resign
 The free, the tranquil heart which late was mine.

XI.

It was a strange wild dream which met mine eyes!
 —Lady, methought that we were doom'd to rove
 Thro' Hell's dark regions, where stern justice drove,
 Our mutual crimes to question and chastise:
 Rashness was mine—for prudence love defies—
 In that a Goddess I had dar'd to love;
 And thine, O hear, harsh beauty, and improve,
 That in a form so fair a cold heart lies.
 As mute we stood, waiting the dread rebuke
 For our past sins, my vision chang'd—and then
 (While Hell the aspect of an Eden took)
 Joy cheer'd our hearts and smooth'd our brows again;
 Mine that I still on thy sweet face could look,
 Thine that thou still couldst make and mark my pain.

XII.

Sleeping at point of dawn, methought that I
 Was chang'd—nay, smile not!—to a spaniel, round
 Whose delicate neck a ring of gold was bound,
 Whence stream'd a band of snow-white silk on high,
 Around me was a flowery meadow, where
 Amid her lovely fellows Chloris sate:
 She saw, fed, fondled me; with joy elate
 I frolicked, and she followed, here and there.
 Then ask'd she, "*How, from Thyrsis' side away,*
My love, your master, canst thou bear to be?"
 When I would fain have said "*Myself am he,*"
 She took me on her lap, there bid me stay
 Thus balanc'd, while to mine her sweet lips bent—
 Ah! when she should have kissed me, the dream went.

XIII.

By Wear's green banks when first in youth I stray'd,
 Scarce higher than the dog that by me play'd,
 I lov'd sweet Ellen; from that moment she
 An angel, not a mortal, seem'd to me;
 —At length I said, "*I love thee*," and my heart
 Felt more; but there my weak tongue lost its art;
 She, with a balmy kiss, replying smil'd
 "*Thou little know'st the love thou talk'st of, child.*"
 Since then with others she has lov'd, till now
 When Time has written man upon my brow,
 And taught me love—sweet source of my sad pains—
 I love her still, she still my love disdains;
 All my young passion cruel to forget,
 While on her one dear kiss my memory lingers yet.

XIV.

Gone was mine Ellen. Wild with haste, I run
 And cried "*What know ye?*" to the waves. Said one,
 "*I, who was first to greet thine idol fair,*
Now kiss the shore grateful for gift so rare."
 I ask'd a second: "*When away she went,*
Her beauteous brow spoke it a soul content?"
 And rippling it replied: "*So sweet she smil'd,*
The hoarse winds silent grew, the tost sea mild."
 Another whispering came; "*'Twas mine to see*
E'en now the sea-nymphs swell with jealousy,
As rov'd her bright eyes o'er the calm blue wave."
 Then said I: "*Sure for me some charge she gave,*
Sent me, at least, by thee one poor farewell?"
 —Slow past the senseless wave, nor further deign'd to tell.

ON TWO SISTERS.

IN song, dance, beauty, wit, two fair nymphs vied;
 Equal in ev'ry charm the heart to lure,
 Twin roses they appear'd—as sweet, as pure—
 Or sister stars which sparkle side by side.
 I knew not, for the two were match'd so well,
 The crown of beauty which should win and wear;
 Though I could say no other is so fair,
 Of these the fairest which I could not tell.
 Had it been thine, blest shepherd, such to view,
 Seated on Ida's hill, not then, I ween,
 Had Venus to thine eyes the victor been.
 The prize, had these been there, to which were due?
 Paris the apple must have cleft in twain,
 Or still unquench'd would Troy's great strife remain.

A SERENADE.

BLESSINGS upon the beauteous night!
 A silver moon, an azure sky.
 Breathes not on earth one zephyr light,
 Trembles no single star on high.

The tender nightingale alone
 The else perfect silence softly breaks
 As from the wild ash anxious moan
 He fondly for his true mate makes.

She hears; and from her leafy seat
 Pours on that listening lover's ear,
 The wish'd reply in music sweet,
 "*Lament not, dearest, I am here.*"

Their passion finds a full return
 Of chastest kisses, mutual sighs;
 Ah! Ellen, wilt thou never learn?
 Like them at once be kind, be wise.

THE SUICIDE FOR LOVE.

AND com'st thou, Lady, o'er the urn
 Thy harshness rear'd, so late to mourn;
 Surely this sad lone spot should be
 Sacred to sorrow and to me.
 I ask not flow'rs to deck my grave,
 Remorse or pity naught I crave:
 Can fading flow'rs or tardy grief
 Bring to the broken heart relief?
 If true thy love, thy sorrow, why,
 When o'er my bark life's storm beat high,
 Wert thou not near with saving hand,
 Or friendly light to point the strand?
 Then back, nor with vain cries invade
 The ancient forest's silence deep,
 Respect, respect my mournful shade,
 Leave, leave me to mine endless sleep.

LOVERS PLIGHTING FAITH AT THE TEMPLE OF
GNIDOS.

At length love's gorgeous temples see—
 Mary, approach the sacred shrine,
 Better in death's cold arms to be
 Than thus in jealous doubt to pine.
 Oft hast thou sworn—to me how sweet
 The thought has been—thro' good and ill
 Thy faith to keep; the vow repeat
 Which calms my pain, to love me still.
 —Yet swear not: if thou wilt then, dear,
 Remember well the sacred spot;
 Tho' mild his imag'd form appear,
 The Deity forgiveth not.
 The crime, the penalty beware,
 Let lips and heart in union move,
 For earth and water, fire and air,
 Will vindicate the cause of love.

MEMORY.

IN vain—in vain—day follows day,
 They pass, and leave behind no trace;
 Time never from my soul away,
 Lost dream of love! can thee efface.

What tho' I mark with calm cold eye
 My rapid years behind me grow,
 As sees the oak his sere leaves lie
 Scatter'd in mouldering heaps below;

And what tho' years have blanch'd my head,
 Tho' my thin blood scarce warms my veins,
 Like stream within its narrow bed
 Bound by stern winter's icy chains;

In my old bosom cherish'd yet
 Thine image, brilliant, young, appears,
 Made chaster, dearer by regret,
 A deathless soul which feels not years.

Thou could'st not, did'st not leave me—No!
 For when my doting desolate eye
 Ceas'd to behold thee here below,
 Sudden I saw thee thron'd on high.

And there thou dost my fond glance meet,
 Ev'n as thou wert on that last day
 When, soaring to its heav'nly seat,
 Thy spirit wing'd its eager way.

Thy beauty to its kindred skies,
 Touching and pure, has follow'd thee;
 Tho' life no longer light thine eyes
 They shine in immortality.

With amorous breath the light winds play
 Amid thy fine and flowing hair,

Whose waves in ebon tresses stray
Undulous o'er thy bosom fair.

As day's first lustre, doubtful, pale
Seen thro' the lingering clouds of morn,
So, 'neath *their* shade's uncertain veil,
Stands out in softer grace thy form.

The sun, which proud above us glows,
With darkness sinks, with day returns;
My sun of love no setting knows,
But ceaseless in my bosom burns.

I hear thee everywhere, and see;
Alone—in crowds—on earth—in air—
The lake thy fair form gives to me—
Thy gentle voice the zephyrs bear.

When the world round is wrapt in sleep,
If but the sighing wind I hear,
I think thy tender accents creep
In melting murmurs on mine ear.

If I admire those burning lights
The night's dark robe which spangling strew,
In ev'ry star which most invites
My gaze, I think thy form I view.

If, haply, as I roam at eve,
Borne by the soft breeze, on me steal
The rose's perfume, I believe
It is thy balmy kiss I feel.

When solitary, sad, before
The throne of Grace my pray'rs arise,
Thy kind hand heals my spirit's sore,
Thy watchful love my want supplies.

By day thine image fills my breast,
 In thee my thoughts begin, and end—
 At night, the guardian of my rest,
 From thee my holiest dreams descend.

If, in that sleep, thine hand were free
 The thread of my sad life to break,
 My soul's diviner part! with thee
 How gladly would my spirit wake.

Two mingled rays from the same sun,
 Two sighs from the same bosom sent,
 Thus link'd our loving souls in one—
Yet, here, alone I still lament!

FORGET ME NOT.

A PALE and modest flow'r I lie
 Where moans some silver streamlet by,
 My birthplace in the dewy field,
 By prouder herbage half conceal'd.

One day a pensive swain, whose breast
 Thy despot pow'r, O love, possesst,
 In his lone wanderings found me there,
 And smiling bore me to his fair.

"E'en as this small sweet flow'r, dear maid,
 Torn from its stem must droop and fade,
 So shall my heart, thy conquest, be
 Mary, when far away from thee.

"Seek thou like it some shady dell,
 By mossy fount or lone vale dwell;
 For 'mid the city's pomp and noise
 The memory of true love dies."

SLEEP.

O PLACID Sleep, that, with ærial tread,
 Thro' night and darkness mov'st on silent wing:
 Thy magic spells around the weary bed
 Of want, or grief, a sweet oblivion fling,
 Go where, belov'd and lovely, Jessy lies,
 On her soft couch those softer limbs reclin'd,
 And, charg'd with evil, let a vision rise
 Sad and ungainly to her dreaming mind:
 In it mine alter'd form and features show,
 My careworn brow, sunk eyes and pallid hue,
 That, when she wakes, her heart may pity know,
 If this you grant me, in requital due,
 My slow and silent hand shall then bestow
 Of your own poppy two fresh wreaths to you.

II.

Son of the silent shadowy humid night!
 O gentle Sleep! sole comfort left below
 For the sick mind! sweet Lethe of the woe
 Whose load makes life one long and painful fight!
 My heart which pines for thee no longer slight;
 Rest to my frail and weary limbs bestow;
 Haste hither, on dark wing, O Sleep; and throw
 O'er me thy magic spells in slumber light.
 Where's silence which still shuns the eye of day?
 Where the light dreams which wont with doubtful tread
 To follow thee, soothing the troubled mind?
 Alas! I vainly call, in vain I pray
 Their cold and obscure shades. O flinty bed!
 O nights of torment lingering and unkind!

GLORY.

GLORY, what art thou that in desperate strife
 Valour for thee his manly breast should bare,
 Or learning waste o'er midnight oil frail life,
 And Death itself in thy embrace seem fair?
 Glory, what art thou, that alike he parts
 With quiet who possesses, or pursues;
 To win thee is great pain, and noble hearts
 Suffer worse anguish from the fear to lose.
 Glory, what art thou? A bright fraud, the child
 Of long vexation, a vain breath, for years
 Panted and pin'd for, ne'er to be enjoy'd;
 The whetstone while we live of Envy wild,
 And when we die a sweet sound in deaf ears—
 Sum of our hope! scourge also of our pride!

DEATH.

WHAT art thou, Death? the vile and guilty heart
 Believes and fears thee as the worst of ills;
 Arm'd with the wrath of Heav'n, thy quivering dart
 With conscious dread the sceptred tyrant fills;
 But the worn wretch, within whose joyless breast
 All hope is dead, whose spirit sinks below
 A load of cureless misery opprest,
 Smiles at thy coming, and implores the blow;
 On the red battle-field, where fiercest fly
 Thy bolts, the soldier meets thee undismay'd;
 The sage regards thee with unquailing eye.
 What art thou, then, O Death?—a doubtful shade—
 A good—an evil—which mankind endues,
 As feeling prompts, with different shape and hues.

TO TIME.

WHY can I not to thee rich shrines devote,
 Winged old man! whose works so wonderful are?
 Thy pow'r already o'er that visage fair
 Steals which such grievous ruin here has wrought;
 Thou dost of my revenge fulfil the thought:
 To earth thou vanity and pride dost bear;
 Thou only Love canst force, and bid him tear
 In twain the unworthy snares my heart which caught
 More dost thou yet—what nor friends' sage advice,
 Nor reason, nor just ire for infinite wrong,
 Nor art, nor nature could to do suffice—
 Thou calm'st the soul, tortur'd and tost so long,
 Which, from the mortal danger snatch'd, its wings
 Spreads, and with thee to nobler emprise springs.

THE VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES.

ON a fair hill I saw a proud abode,
 Full many a fathom high, with columns crown'd
 Whose glittering girths were all with diamonds bound;
 The dome was fashion'd on the Doric mode,
 Nor stone nor marble its exterior show'd,
 But over it was lucid crystal wound,
 Throwing rich lustre, as of noonday, round;
 A hundred steps with Afric's pure gold glow'd;
 Gold was the ceiling, and the summit bright
 With many a plate of scaly gold was dight;
 Of jasper and of emerald mix'd the floor:
 —E'en as I gazed, O vain unstable world!
 A sudden earthquake the tall mountain tore,
 And to the ground the stately fabric hurl'd.

ATTACHMENT TO EARTH.

THE soul, from contemplating things divine
 Invigorate grown, yearns ever to attain
 Its native heav'n, but bounds so brief confine
 Its wing that all its toils and hope seem vain:
 To higher regions yet and worlds more free
 A strong desire impels its restless flight,
 Where, reach'd at last its goal, the veil shall be
 Uprais'd which hides from it eternal light.
 But, when death seizes on the body frail,
 With backward glance, how grieves it to be torn
 From human joys, and friends lov'd long and well.
 So Proserpine when from the smiling vale
 Of Enna, in the arms of Pluto borne
 Wept, childlike, for her flow'rs that earthward fell.

PROVIDENCE.

EVEN as with fond love for her infant race
 Which round her play the anxious mother glows,
 And, as they clasp her feet or knees, bestows
 To this a kiss, to that a close embrace,
 And from each act, each change of voice or face,
 Their wants, so frequent and so varied, knows,
 Guards and instructs by word or look, and shows
 That, pleas'd or angry, love retains its place,
 So Providence on Man with favouring eye
 Looks down, our grief consoles, our want supplies,
 Extends to all his care, hears ev'ry cry;
 And if awhile a favour He denies,
 'Tis but that we may ask it from on high,
 —For *seeming* to withhold it He complies.

SONNETS ON THE NATIVITY.

I.

SHEPHERDS afield were keeping watch by night
 Over their flocks, when lo! in angel frame,
 The glory of the Lord upon them came,
 And, round them shining, struck with sore affright.
 But mild that angel: "Fear not, for behold,
 Good tidings of great joy for all I bear:
 This day to you in David's town, his heir,
 Is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord foretold."
 But hark! from Heaven what sudden anthems sound?
 "To God all glory in the highest be,
 Peace upon earth, good-will to man abound!"
 Then rose those shepherds in glad haste to see
 Complete that wonder, where, in manger mean,
 Was laid the blessed babe his parents fond between.

II.

"Say, where, ye favour'd race is he your King,
 The Virgin's promis'd seed, at whose new star,
 Brightening the anxious East, from lands afar,
 To the God-child our pray'rs and praise we bring?
 In Bethlehem for thus our prophets tell,
 Though high in honour Judah's princes be,
 Thou Bethlehem art not least: a Chief from thee
 Shall come to rule my people Israel."
 The wise men heard and went: when lo! in the East
 That star, rekindling, points their joyful way,
 Till lambent, o'er the babe, its motion ceas'd.
 Entering as saw they where the Saviour lay,
 Kneeling they worship, and their gifts unfold,
 Presenting at his feet myrrh, frankincense, and gold.

MATTHEW AT THE RECEIPT OF CUSTOMS.

THE sinner sate, on present good intent
 And things of earth, yet labouring in the gulf
 Of bitterness. Upon the world's blind thrall
 With looks of love, the pitying Saviour bent:
 "Arise and follow." Matthew heard and went.
 Say! was for him alone that friendly call,
 Or, now alike as then, to us, to all,
 To wake and warn, the tender summons sent?
 Yes! still he strives with us, at ev'ry hour,
 In ev'ry place, by any means to win,
 By his long mercy, by his infinite pow'r,
 To wean us from the world, to save from sin;
 And I—Lord! yet forgive me for thy Son,
 And strengthen my weak steps his heav'nly race to run.

DISCIPLES SENT BY JOHN TO JESUS.

"FROM the dank cell where pamper'd Herod's hate
 Dooms him to pine, John greets thee, and would learn
 If thou art he on whom our hopes should turn,
 Or still if Israel must another wait?"
 Christ heard, yet—as he heard them not—pursued
 His miracles of pow'r and pitying love,
 Signs which to man might best his Godhead prove,
 Drawing from darkness day, from evil good:
 Then, mildly, turning to their message, said,
 "Go! tell the Baptist these: that the lame walk,
 Lepers are cleans'd, the deaf hear, the dumb talk,
 The blind receive their sight, and that the dead
 Are raised, and, through me the sole true door,
 Salvation's blessed hope is preached unto the poor!"

WIDOW OF NAIN.

THEO' Nain's gate they bear him silent, slow,
 And slow and sad behind the mourners crowd,
 Great cause of sorrow theirs, for death has bow'd
 The youngest, comeliest of their city low:
 His mother's only son, a widow she,
 Her staff of life, her age's pride, for whom
 She then had died, if from the bitter tomb
 Spar'd yet awhile her tender child might be.
 In vain—yet not in vain! for Jesus saw
 Her grief and pitied her. Advancing near,
 "Weep not," he said, and touch'd the naked bier,
 While they who bare it stood in solemn awe,
 "Young man, I say to thee, arise!" 'Tis done!
 The dead man lives! the widow clasps her son.

ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

DAUGHTER of Zion, lift thy grateful voice!
 Meek, on a colt, an ass's foal, thy King,
 The Just one comes salvation who shall bring;
 Through all thy hills, Jerusalem, rejoice!
 She wakes, she lives—from ev'ry echoing street
 Waving glad palms her sons to greet him go,
 And many in the way their garments throw,
 Or cut green boughs to cast beneath his feet.
 And they who went before and came behind
 For all the mighty works which he had done
 To God in thankfulness and praises join'd,
 "Hosanna to our King, to David's son!
 To him, who cometh in the Lord be given
 Hosannas in the highest! peace in Heaven!"

JUDAS RETURNING THE THIRTY PIECES.

SCARCE has their shackled victim pass'd the gate;
 Scarce thro' the wide hall their loud triumph ceas'd:
 Whispers and greetings fall from judge and priest,
 While gleams in ev'ry eye successful hate—
 Who comes? 'tis Judas! gasping, wild and pale,
 Before the Sanhedrim the gold he threw;
 "He, He is sinless, the blasphemers you;
 Your witnesses have forged a lying tale;
 I, too, have sinn'd, who in his butchers' hands
 Have plac'd the Lamb without a spot or soil."
 The High-priest scornful heard with slow cold smile,
 "This irks not us; the thing thy care demands."
 —Shrieked the black traitor, in that worst despair
 Of too late penitence, forth rushing—WHERE?

THE DEATH OF JUDAS.

WHEN the curst Judas, by remorse possest,
 A life of sin clos'd with a death of shame,
 The devil who so long had vex'd his breast,
 Waving his wings of fire to meet him came.
 Where round his blacken'd neck the noose still prest
 The fiend his keen grasp fix'd, and in the flame
 Whose mounting waves a terrible joy confest,
 Headlong and hissing, whirl'd the struggling frame,
 —As swept the hot blast the thick smoke aside,
 Stern Satan's form appear'd on high displayed,
 A grim smile softening his brow of pride,
 Within his scorching lap the traitor laid,
 And his black smoky mouth to his applied,
 Returning him the kiss which Christ betrayed.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

I ASK'D of Heav'n—"Who against God has done
 This crime unparallel'd and past belief?"
 Heav'n thunder'd "Man, while I to mark my grief
 Shut up in black eclipse the frightened sun."
 I ask'd the Sea—hoarse moan'd it in reply,
 "'Twas Man who nail'd him to yon cross of shame;
 For deed so dark my anguish to proclaim
 My just ire heav'd my lowest depths on high."
 Of Earth I ask'd—with like dismay and pain
 Earth murmur'd—"Man, while I with horror shook
 Thro' all my frame where still its signs remain."
 To man, who journey'd near with jocund look,
 At length I turn'd. He careless heard, in pride
 Bent his high head, pass'd on, and nought replied.

A FATHER ON THE DEATH OF HIS SON.

SCARCE of thy life budded, my boy, the flow'r,
 To the world's wonder yielding a rich store
 Of talents, ripe e'en then, with a rare dow'r
 Of virtue and of worth which promis'd more,
 When—that in thee the wisdom of the old
 She witnessed—cruel Atropos, misled,
 Deeming the spindle full, where, twining, roll'd
 Thy flax of life, snapt short the golden thread;
 And thee, excelling Nature's proudest boast,
 Laid low, and left me here, who the dark way
 Should first have trod, to endless grief a prey:
 I know not where her hate was guilty most,
 Crushing the dear and lovely germ in thee,
 Or the old useless trunk leaving untouch'd in me.

A HUSBAND ON THE DEATH OF HIS WIFE.

WITH infinite pain from a far foreign shore
 A tender plant the thrifty peasant bore,
 And, in his richest field, when skies were fair,
 Chose it a spot where it might bloom and bear;
 The warm sun, the soft rain, the summer wind,
 Fruitful and fair their pow'rs to make it join'd;
 Rejoic'd his honest heart; and sure at last
 Deem'd the reward of all his labours past.
 But ah! the morn, which should have made his own
 The ripe and golden store, told, as it shone,
 Some greedy hand had stripp'd the goodly tree,
 —*Thus*, too, alas! a few short hours from me
 Snatch'd the sweet fruit of many bitter years,
 And left me but the leaves to water with my tears.

A RETROSPECT.

O LADY, when I look on thee, and mark thy beauty's light,
 Thy dark hair flowing o'er thy breast, thine eye with feeling
 bright,
 The thoughts of other days overcome me like a spell,
 Of scenes, in youth beloved, and in age remember'd well.
 I gaze on thee, and hopes, which long all slumbering had lain
 'Neath Sorrow's cold dull trance, awake to light and life again,
 The lov'd, the lost before me rise in hue as bright and warm,
 As when opening life lent ev'ry scene its own peculiar charm.
 Again I see my white cot's wall within that quiet grove,
 The lake all clear and calm beneath, the mountains wild above;
 My first last love is smiling there, and lo! link'd hand in hand,
 Again my four fair cherub boys come bounding o'er the strand.
 Her eye's mild glance was like to thine, like thine her open
 brow,
 Like thine her soft smile spoke a heart all pure and calm
 below;

I mark all these, and o'er my breast forgotten feelings rush,
And from my eye the stranger tears in welcome torrents gush.

And where is she? Where, where are they? my beautiful,
my brave?

Hark! tortur'd Memory's slow reply—Deep, deep in the cold
grave:

Life's dream flies on, and Death comes quick: two sons in
silence sleep

Engulf'd within the ocean's breast where Biscay's waters sweep.

My third child sank to glorious rest on red Barossa's field,
And proud as wav'd her victor flag, his faith to Britain seal'd.
No parent o'er his weltering bier to breathe affection's sig.,
His dirge the groan of dying foes which round him swell'd
on high.

But he, the loveliest and the last, with eye so blue and bright;
He sleeps not 'neath the briny wave, nor sank in bloody fight;
We treasur'd him, we watch'd and pray'd in fondness and
in fear,

For all our worldly happiness, our hopes were centred here.

In vain, for o'er his tender cheek while health still seem'd
to play,

The cruel spoiler lurk'd within, and fading day by day,
Gently he sunk, and briefly died; above his lowly bed
Affection mourn'd and Genius wept—her child, her poet dead.

My wife the while with watchful love still strove, and gentle art,
To chase away the sorrow which hung heavy at my heart;
Tho' o'er her fair face play'd the smile, 'twas like the sun on
snow

Gilding the surface bright awhile tho' all lurk'd cold below.

Yet, for I mark'd not her decline, as she told me not of pain,
With Time, the wounds of Death, his child, were closing
fast again,

So when at last the deadly news was known to me, it burst
A thunderbolt upon the heart which yet with life was curst.

Gently she took my clay-cold hand, and pointing to the sky.
 While took her voice a sweeter tone, a softer glow her eye;
 "Mourn not for me, thro' death alone can life eternal be,
 I do but go before to prepare the crown for thee."

I wept such tears as Christians weep; I bow'd me to the rod,
 And, as each earthly tie prov'd frail, still closer clung to God;
 I plac'd my help, my hope in him, in whom is hope alone,
 And o'er my wounded bosom soon a holy calm was thrown.

And now though life can never be what it in youth has been,
 Yet still I love to muse upon each dear departed scene;
 And from the wreck of happiness a lovely flow'r there springs,
 Which speaks to me of brighter days, and tells of better
 things.

Yet shall we meet; man dies not all; as o'er the festering grave
 Soft verdure brightens, and sweet flow'rs of grace and promise
 wave,

So from the lone and ruin'd heart where joy has ceas'd to
 bloom,

Fair hopes eternal spring of peace and bliss beyond the tomb.

LINES FOR MUSIC.

"The Bells of St. Petersburg."

THESE fading flow'rs, these fading flow'rs,
 They speak to me of happier hours,
 Ere Fortune frown'd or Friendship chang'd,
 Ere Hope grew cold and Love estrang'd.

The perfume sweet, the varied glow
 Which deck'd them once is faded now—
 And flown the feelings, pure and warm,
 Which lent my opening life its charm.

Tho' now their wither'd hue betray
 The blighting hand of rude decay,
 Yet still the musing mind may trace
 In each shrunk leaf its pristine grace.

E'en thus untir'd will Memory's wing
 To scenes of former joys still cling,
 Thus bygone pleasures bring relief
 To still the pangs of present grief.

TO AN ABSENT WIFE.

FOR whom these roses grew, she is no more,
 No more for me awhile! Vast ocean's roar
 Severs us now: till two long years are past
 Our lots, which yet grew twin-like, must be cast
 'Mid different scenes and under distant skies!
 Childless and spouseless now, for me her eyes
 Large, loving, lustrous—save in Memory's dream
 As stars thro' mist—no more in rapture beam.
 Her looks and winning words now others bless,
 Others her form in fondest welcome press.
 Yet bear thou up, my heart! nor grudge that she,
 Long dear as thine, dear for herself, should be:
 She tending them, they her, each, all shall more
 Son, brother, husband, love thee than before:
 Their present joy, and new-found wealth in her
 Shall closer love and holier union stir,
 Young mother she, fondling those reverent hairs
 Shall lighten age and sing aside its cares;
 While, circling that grave aunt, in frolic glee
 Our children climb her side or clasp her knee;
 And as—in pictur'd woof so mix and meet
 Light threads and dark—old memories, bitter-sweet,
 Then rise of thee, the rose-lipp'd angel, Hope
 Stands smiling near, the ready door to ope
 Of a bright future, calm and cloudless, when
 Old, young, all dear to thee, united then
 Round one glad hearth to one good God shall raise
 From happy hearts the prayer of grateful praise.

ON THE MARRIAGE OF TWO COUSINS.

THUS two young rivers, sprung from the same source,
 After long windings join at last their course,
 And, thro' the same fair scenes, in the same bed,
 Unite their murmurs and their crystal spread;
 Sweet birds in praise their happy hymen sing,
 Flocks frisk around and flow'rs rejoicing spring,
 While of their mingled waves the clear bright race
 Makes rich the earth, reflects Heav'n's smiling face.

A CAMP SONG.

To horse, to horse, merry comrades all!
 Hear ye not the bugle call?
 The sun shines o'er the mountains high,
 Then mount, mount, mount! the foe is nigh.

See far and fast their bands advancing,
 Sabre and spur and pennon glancing,
 Those banners wave in the morning fair,
 A bloodier tint shall soon be there.

Down with the foeman,
 In battle spare no man,
 Save him who struggled boldly;
 Slay, slay the coward
 Who fled when death lower'd,
 Or but fought for his country coldly.

Now on, on, on, where the swords are clashing,
 Where war-steeds are fastest and fiercest dashing;
 Rush where the foeman's ranks are thickest,
 Glory or death come there the quickest.

Victory, victory, the day's our own,
 Fortune hath on freedom shone;
 Ours is the fame which cannot die,
 Ours the names which shall shine on high:
 Peace be to them, the gallant and brave
 Who silently sleep in Honour's grave,
 And laurels to us who the fight outlive,
 With the smiles that Beauty knows well to give.

THE MINSTREL.

STREW flow'rs, spring flow'rs, above his grave,
 In life he lov'd them well—
 Strew flow'rs, whose blest bloom soon to fade
 The minstrel's fate may tell.

Place ye him where the forest trees,
 Checking the light of day,
 May emblem forth the cloud which still
 Darken'd above his way.

On sea-chaf'd shore, or barren hill,
 In valley deep and lone,
 Choose where ye will, but be the spot
 To the world's eye unknown.

Sound ye no notes of woe for him,
 Raise no weak wailing strain,
 Rather rejoice that one below
 'Scapes from a world of pain.

O'er him no anxious vigils keep,
 Breathe one short simple pray'r,
 Then leave him to his endless rest,
 Alone, in darkness there.

Let there no marble mock'ry rise
 Above his narrow bed;

The green turf only o'er his breast—
The plain stone by his head.

Carve ye thereon his hapless name
Who, thro' life's dismal round,
Much woe, small joy, and frequent wrong—
For he was humble—found.

Awhile the sun a kind light shed
His early path to greet,
When flush'd with hope, on fame intent,
He sprung the prize to meet.

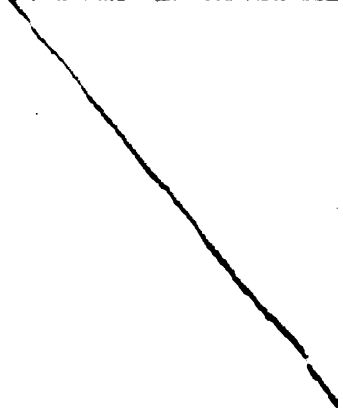
But fortune chang'd—the friends who first
Gladden'd the difficult way
Vanish'd like summer birds or leaves
At winter's breath away.

Love, too, was his—a meteor fire,
Leading to ruin's brink,
Whose treacherous light the danger show'd,
Then left him there to sink.

Cold hearts, false tongues their venom breath'd
Against his friendless name—
Too soon the world believes the tale
Which mars another's fame!

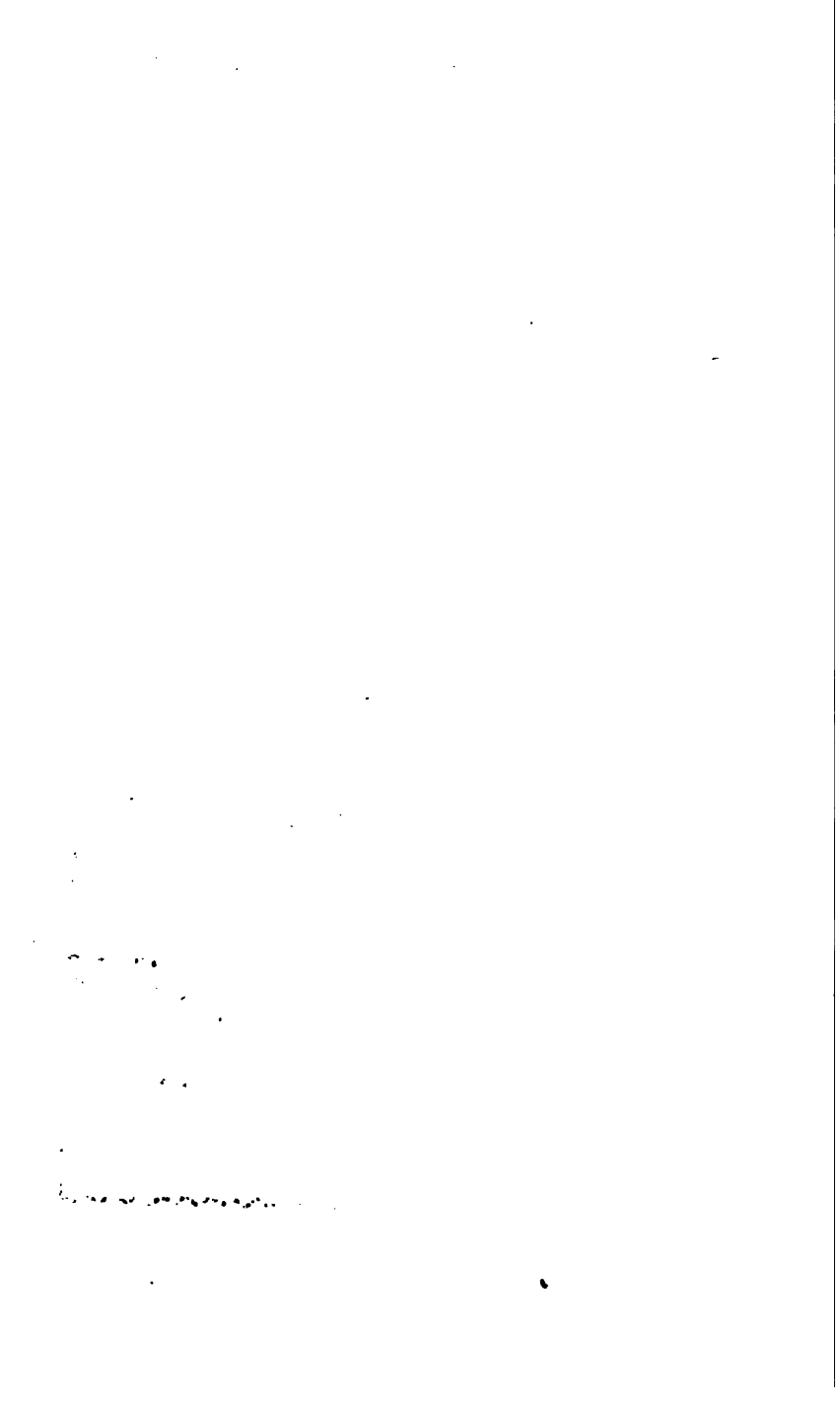
What boots it now? within the grave
Tranquil shall be his rest—
Nor hope, nor fear, nor grief, nor gain.
To vex his dreamless breast.

Mortal! in life your hate denied
One smile his path to cheer,
Pass on, your tardy grief is vain,
In death he asks no tear.



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